

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Links to Christ and Grace

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgveCGOgn0okeiNXLcmZI_w?view_as=subscriber

Website: <https://www.christandgrace.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ChristandGracePetersburg/>

OFFERINGS:

We know that this is an extraordinarily challenging time, with many facing serious financial hardship. So many of you who need the church right now feel terrible about not being able to support it financially. Please remove this from your list of worries. We are here to support each other, and we will get through this together. We know that those who are able to do more to support the church at this time will do so, recognizing that if the shoe were on the other foot, our fellow parishioners would gladly do the same for us. It's who we are and what we do.

For those who are able, please know that you can make a contribution electronically by going to "Give" at www.christandgrace.org. Offerings can be set up for a one time or recurring gift. The church is charged a fee for this service. If you are able to include the fee with your offering, the total amount is tax deductible. Or you can set up a regular payment through your bank's bill pay, or mail checks to Christ and Grace 1545 S. Sycamore Street, Petersburg, VA 23805.

Church staff and parishioners are working overtime right now to be a beacon of faith, hope and love for all, and it's all made possible by your generous financial support. Thanks to all of you who are able to go the extra mile in this trying time.

PRAYER LIST:

We beg you to feed the hungry, protect the refugee, embrace the distressed, house the homeless, nurse the sick, and comfort the dying. Especially we pray for Robyn Arrington, Nancy Gates, Betty Goodman, Kayleigh Harris, Brian Hettinger, Nell Howard, Mark Jones, Pret Kaichen, Josh Lumley, Kent Mallory, Mike McKibbin, Joan Mitchell, Addison Owens, Sharon Plymire, Maren Rahn, Lilly Rudd, Mark Sheffield, Wendy Taft, the Trowbridge Family, Larry Tucker, and Paige Whitley

HOLY WEEK RESOURCES: Pick up at church from 10 AM – 2 PM Friday, April 3.
Items will be outside in the back parking lot. Please practice safe distancing and do not gather to visit.

Palm Cross Kits, Holy Week Worship Booklets, Pansies, Easter Baskets

We have put together some things for Holy Week and Easter that we are making every effort to make available to you. Attached you will find a Holy Week Worship Booklet for you to use at home for worship on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and for an Easter Eve Vigil or on Easter Day. You can print copies for home use. If you need a hard copy they will be available to pick up at church on Friday from 10-2.

The Gates Family has lovingly put together palm cross kits for you to make your own palm crosses at home. These are also available for pick up on Friday, as are pots of pansies beautifully grown by Kathy Talmage.

Ann Ifekwunigwe and Laura Crocker have made Easter Baskets for the children who will be missing the Egg Hunt this year, and these too are available for pick up on Friday.

If you are not able to get to church and would like these items, please let Robin know as soon as possible. We will make every effort to have them delivered to you Friday afternoon or Saturday.

Message from Robin+

Yesterday Gov. Ralph Northam announced a mandatory stay-at-home order effective until June 10 in an effort to stem the tide of rising coronavirus cases and deaths during the global pandemic. Bishop Susan Haynes has informed the clergy that the order does not change the guidelines that have previously been given except to say that they are now mandated. To that end, church services will likely not resume before June 10. It will be longer than that if we do not all commit to practicing safe distancing and staying at home. We will continue to provide resources each week through our weekly email, videos on our Christ and Grace Youtube channel, and on our Facebook page. You can access the Youtube channel and Facebook page from our website, www.christandgrace.org.

These are challenging times and I remain accessible to you whenever you have a tangible need, a spiritual or pastoral need, or just want to talk for a few minutes. Please call or text me at 804-338-0698. You can also email me at rteasley@christandgrace.org.

I encourage you to read our weekly email or check the website links weekly so that we can stay connected as a parish. We are all being asked to make use of the internet if it's available to us and one excellent tool is Zoom. I am going to be sending out emails to small groups of you that will invite you to participate in a Zoom meeting. All you will need to do to join the meeting is to have the Zoom app downloaded on your phone or computer, and then click on the link at the assigned time. Zoom gives us the gift of seeing and hearing one another, allowing us to connect virtually, which right now is the next best thing. Last weekend I had a Zoom happy hour with my girlfriends, and it was wonderful! If enough of us become familiar with this, we can have some Zoom worship services together.

Here's a link to watch a video on how to join a Zoom meeting - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9isp3qPeQ0E>

For those of you who do not use the internet, we will continue to touch base with you by mail or phone as we are able but encourage you to call us whenever you need anything. I also ask that you check on one another on a regular basis.

I mentioned before that this is the Lentiest Lent ever, and I believe this will also be the Holiest Holy Week ever as we are all so much more aware of the gift of life and the grace of God. I invite you to set up your prayer space and worship at home during Holy Week. If you need a Book of Common Prayer let me know and I will get one to you. It is in our common prayer, no matter where we are physically, that we are all joined together spiritually.

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving – Colossians 4:2

May this Holy Week make God's presence known to you. Peace, Robin+

Link to Readings for Palm Sunday

https://www.lectionarypage.net/YearA_RCL/HolyWk/APalmSun_RCL.html

Sermon for Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday

Matthew 26:14- 27:66 April 5, 2020

The Rev. Robin Teasley

Palm Sunday begins a week of unexpected happenings in the life of Jesus and the disciples. As we read the Gospel story, we easily see that it's full of changes as it moves from Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, cheered by a crowd shouting hosanna, to a crowd that suddenly changes its allegiance and shouts for Jesus to be crucified. Perhaps we see this more easily in the Gospel story this year, because never have we been more aware of the fragility of life, of the reality that life as we know it can all change in an instant.

When we are reading a novel or watching a movie and the plot begins to pick up its pace, we begin to know (and fear) what is about to happen next. Today's Passion Narrative is like that. It's like a bad dream and we cannot wake up. Nothing is going like we thought it was supposed to go but instead everything goes from bad to worse, the whole thing spiraling downward until it hits rock bottom. This drama is all too real for us this year. It's a cosmic drama and we all have a part to play even though we are not in church hearing the various voices reading the parts. Maybe we can take a moment to consider what our part is this year, in light of our current situation.

Here's what I am noticing as I read the story this year as our world moves through a pandemic. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus enters Jerusalem and is praised by the people. Fulfilling the words of the prophet Zechariah, he is called the King, the son of David. Life is looking good with the arrival of the hoped-for Messiah. He cleanses the temple, challenging the religious authorities; he teaches with parables, answers questions about the Resurrection, and gives the commandment to love God and neighbor.

As we move through these strange days, we are cleaning everything – our hands, our homes, our closets and garages, and there is no disinfectant to be found anywhere. We are debating where authority should lie, we are teaching one another on the best ways to stay safe, we are more concerned than we previously have been about the details of the Resurrection, and we are trying harder to love God and neighbor.

And yet, we also find ourselves to be like many of the characters in the Passion narrative. We are in denial like Peter, we make selfish decisions like Pilate, we follow the crowd and hoard toilet paper, bread, meats, and disinfectants. We are bystanders who say a lot but do little. Like the elders, scribes, and priests we judge and convict others, because somehow finding someone else to blame makes us feel better. We have a hard time praying and sleeping because when we get still and quiet, the fear creeps in.

What stood out for me as I read the narrative this week was the palpable sense of fear. It's as if everyone was afraid of what might happen next. Everyone had just enough information to be dangerous. It's a trait of human nature to let our fear direct our actions, to let our need for self-preservation override our care and concern for others. This theme runs through Matthew's account of the last week of Jesus' life and through every week of our own lives right now.

Fear is a powerful thing. It will cause us to lie, cheat, steal, hoard, vilify others, and even harm or murder that person or thing we perceive to be a threat. It's hard to be compassionate, it's hard to love God and neighbor when we are living in fear. We see that clearly in today's Gospel account.

Perhaps we are so afraid of others because we see ourselves in their behavior, because we know we are just as capable of the same behavior.

But here's something to think about as we read the Passion narrative - In Jesus' last hours none of the disciples is a model of faithfulness. Peter denies knowing his Lord three times. After the awful crucifixion, none of the Twelve even attend to Jesus' body. At a time when loving God and neighbor could endanger them, all the disciples fail. The truth is that everyone in the story was fearful in some way or another.

One of the messages of Holy Week is that sooner or later, because of our fear, every disciple will betray Jesus. We will betray him in the workplace when it will cost too much to think like a Christian. We will betray him in our homes when the anger is so great that we hurt those who trust us the most. We will betray him in the sacred commitments we make that we simply cannot keep. We will betray Jesus by our indifference to the poor, by our refusal to turn the other cheek to our enemies, and in all the ways we fall asleep rather than stay awake with Christ.

I invite you to listen for the truth in today's Gospel. Find yourself in this narrative and acknowledge the truth that you hear. And we will spend some time on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday more deeply exploring why it is that we need a Savior. Holy Week is an essential journey in our faith, as it helps us to see what fear can lead us to do or not do, and what redemption we receive through the amazing grace and gift of God in his Son Jesus Christ. Because while our story today ends at rock bottom, it is not the end. It is Jesus who clues us in to the hope that there is something more than death. And in these pandemic times, it is Jesus alone who can calm our fears and show us what love looks like.

Take some time, maybe in the prayer space you've created at home, to read the Passion narrative. It's in Matthew, chapter 26:14- 27:66. Notice the fears in the characters in this holy story, and the fears that rise up in you as you read. And then offer your fears to Jesus and let him carry them to the cross for you. Amen.