***THE EASTER CODE***

**Lenten Worship Series – Palm Sunday**

***Code Word:* Celebrate**

**April 2, 2023**

|  |
| --- |
| **WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINE**S  Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. Sermon manuscripts are included as a *sample* and not to be preached verbatim. |

**[*Project* “Palm Sunday.QRCode”***(in Graphics file)* ***or below words on screen as people enter*]**

|  |
| --- |
| ***Code Word:* Celebrate**  ***The march of Jesus to the cross was a march of humility and triumph.*** |

**Announcements and Offering**

|  |
| --- |
| **Drama – Beasts of Burden** |

**Call to Worship:**

This final ride of humility and triumph, on that borrowed colt, was a ride to the city of his death. Every aspect was done with the generations of souls who would put their trust in him in mind. He rode to his death so that we would reign in life with him forever. He did what he did so that, in a world made new again, we would sing hosanna songs to him forever and ever and ever.

(*Journey to the Cross,* p. 201)

**[*Put scripture below on screen.*]**

“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Matthew 21:9, NIV)

**[\**Children enter sanctuary waving palm branches.*]**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Hosanna, Loud Hosanna** (by Jeanette Threlfall, 1873)  [*words below are not in S.A. Song Book*] | TB-127 – Ellacombe | HTD1-T9 (3 vs. – band ending) |
| 1) Hosanna, loud hosanna, the little children sang;  Through pillared court and temple the lovely anthem rang.  To Jesus, who had blessed them close folded to His breast,  The children sang their praises, the simplest and the best. | | |
| 2) From Olivet they followed mid an exultant crowd,  The victor palm branch waving, and chanting clear and loud.  The Lord of earth and Heaven rode on in lowly state,  Nor scorned that little children should on His bidding wait. | | |
| 3) “Hosanna in the highest!” that ancient song we sing,  For Christ is our Redeemer, the Lord of Heaven our King.  O may we ever praise Him with heart and life and voice,  And in His blissful presence eternally rejoice! | | |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **HC#97/SS#29 – Blessed Be the Name of the Lord** | HC-97  SS-29 | HCD8-T17 |
| **SB#73/HC#141/SS#28 – All hail the power** | TB-306 – Coronation  HC-141  SS-28 | HTD5-T5 (4 vs.)  HCD13-T11 |
| **HC#158 – Blessed Be Your Name** | HC-158 | HCD14-T18 |
| **HC#188 – Save Now** | HC-188 | HCD17-T18 |
| **SB#391/HC#171 – Stand up and bless the Lord** | TB-149 – Falcon Street  HC-171 | HTD3-T12 (3 vs.)  HCD16-T11 |
| **HC#195 – Hear Our Praises** | HC-195 | HCD18-T15 |
| **HC#225 – Hosanna (Praise Is Rising)** | HC-225 | HCD21-T15 |
| **SB#56/HC#251 – Praise to the Lord, the Almighty** | TB-735 – Lobe den Herren  HC-251 | HTD4-T11 (4 vs.)  HCD24-T11 |
| **SB#225 – Jesus comes! Let all adore Him** | TB-392 – Ottawa | HTD9-T14 (4 vs.) |

**Invocation**

|  |
| --- |
| **Children’s Moment - Celebrate** |

***The Triumphal Entry***

**Scripture Reading: Matthew 21:1-11**

[Scripture can be read by one person, split up into a responsive reading, or as a “readers’ theater using *The Voice* version - <https://www.biblegateway.com/> ]

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **HC#226 – I Worship You** | HC-226 | HCD21-T16 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#353/HC#49/SS#67 – Be still, for the presence of the Lord** | TB-566 – same  HC-49  SS-67 | No HT CD  HCD3-T19 |
| **SB#565/HC#89/SS-43 – All I once held dear (Knowing You)** | TB-725 – same  HC-89  SS-43 | No HT CD  HCD7-T19 |
| **HC#123/SS#55 – Shine on Us** | HC-123  SS-55 | HCD11-T13 |
| **SB#32/HC#127 – How deep the Father’s love for us** | TB-663 – same  HC-127 | No HT CD  HCD11-T17 |
| **HC#136 – We All Bow Down** | HC-136 | HCD12-T16 |
| **SB#439/HC#139 – There is a message** | TB-879 – same  HC-139 | No HT CD  HCD12-T19 |
| **HC#156 – Enter In** | HC-156 | HCD14-T16 |
| **HC#160/SS#125 – I Surrender** | HC-160  SS-125 | HCD14-T20 |
| **HC#162 – The Power of the Cross** | HC-162 | HCD15-T12 |
| **SB#243/HC#164 – Before the throne of God above** | TB-52 – same  HC-164 | No HT CD  HCD15-T14 |
| **HC#166 – We Fall Down** | HC-166 | HCD15-T16 |
| **HC#188 – Save Now** | HC-188 | HCD17-T18 |
| **SB#376/HC#219 – King of kings, majesty** | TB-722 – same  HC-219 | No HT CD  HCD20-T19 |
| **SB#209 – When Jesus looked o’er Galilee** | TB-70 – Fewster | HTD3-T13 (4 vs.) |
| **SB#498 – I want the faith of God** | TB-159 – Trentham | HTD8-T17 (4 vs.) |

|  |
| --- |
| ***Code Word:* Multiply**  **“Go into all the world and make disciples.” - Matthew 28:19** |
| **DESCRIPTION:** During the Lenten season we will have an opportunity to take 6 weeks to intentionally fast and pray for the salvation of others. The goal and focus on ‘Multiply’ is to share our faith and to develop an *urgency of salvation* mindset for those who do not have a relationship with Jesus Christ; and to invite congregants to fast/pray for salvation of others. It would be wonderful to celebrate on Easter Sunday the people who have accepted Jesus as their Savior! |
| **SUPPLIES NEEDED:** a prayer box on the holiness table (clear case works best); cross which fits inside the box; prayer cards printed on card stock (on three different colors – *see samples in Graphics file*); pens. |
| **VISUAL/INTERACTIVE PRAYER:** During the pastoral prayer portion each Sunday, the meeting leader will invite people to participate in 3 different ways, either writing the name of:  1) **someone for whom you are praying for salvation** (white card)  2) **someone to whom you have witnessed this past week** (green card)  3) **someone who has accepted Jesus as their Savior** (red card)  and placing that card in the prayer box on the holiness table. |
| * Explain the evangelism “visual” * “Multiply” – fill out cards/place in box on holiness table * Prayer time as people put cards in box * Pastoral Prayer |

**Message – *Code Word:* Celebrate**

***Celebrate***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **SB#241 – And can it be** | TB-445 – Sagina | HTD4-T13 (4 vs.) |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#89/HC#161/SS#48 – O for a thousand tongues to sing (My Great Redeemer’s Praise)** | TB-59 – Azmon  TB-75 – Grimsby  HC-161  SS-48 | HTD3-T4 (4 vs.)  No HT CD  HCD15-T11 |
| **SB#139 – He came to give us life** | TB-645 – same | No HT CD |
| **SB#167 – Hail, Thou once despisèd Jesus** | TB-370 – Hyfrydol  HC-114 | HTD1-T14 (3 vs.)  HCD10-T14 |
| **SB#258/HC#264 – Jesus shall reign** | TB-11 – Duke Street  HC-264 | HTD3-T8 (4 vs.)  HCD25-T14 |
| **SB#379/HC#78/SS#44 – Lord, I lift Your name on high** | TB-948 – You came from Heaven to earth  HC-78  SS-44 | No HT CD  HCD6-T18 |
| **SB#391/HC#171 – Stand up and bless the Lord** | TB-149 – Falcon Street  HC-171 | HTD3-T12 (3 vs.)  HCD16-T11 |
| **SB#466/HC#105/SS#32 – I stand amazed in the presence (How Marvelous)** | TB-769 – My Savior’s love  HC-105  SS-32 | HTD10-T8 (4 vs.)  HCD9-T15 |
| **HC#188 – Save Now** | HC-188 | HCD17-18 |
| **HC#209 – Come People of the Risen King** | HC-209 | HCD19-T19 |
| **HC#225 – Hosanna (Praise Is Rising)** | HC-225 | HCD21-T15 |
| **HC#248 – Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)** | HC-248 | HCD23-T18 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Transition – Leader:**  ***8****For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God’s truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed****9****and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written:*  *“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles;     I will sing the praises of your name.”*  ***10****Again, it says,*  *“Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people.”*  ***11****And again,*  *“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles;     let all the peoples extol him.”*  (Romans 15:8-11, NIV) | | |
| **HC#209 – Come People of the Risen King** | HC-209 | HCD19-T19 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **Optional Transition – Leader:**  ***3****For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,****4****that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.*  (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, NIV) | | |
| **SB#379/HC#78/SS#44 – Lord, I lift Your name on high** | TB-948 – You came from Heaven to earth  HC-78  SS-44 | No HT CD  HCD6-T18 |
| **Optional Transition – Leader:**  ***9*** *The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,*  *“****Hosanna****to the Son of David!”*  *“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”*  *“****Hosanna****in the highest heaven!”*  (Matthew 21:9, NIV) | | |
| **HC#225 – Hosanna (Praise is Rising)** | HC-225 | HCD21-T15 |
| **Optional Transition – Leader:**  ***3****Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.****4****For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love****5****hepredestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—****6****to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.****7****In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace****8****that he lavished on us.*  (Ephesians 1:3-8, NIV) | | |
| **HC#248 – Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)** | HC-248 | HCD23-T18 |

**Benediction:**

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

([Hebrews 13:20-21](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=hebrews+13%3a20-21), NIV)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **HC#309 – Go in Peace, Go in Love** | HC-309 | HCD29-T19 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#861/HC#149/SS#41 – In Christ alone** | TB-132 – same  HC-149  SS-41 | No HT CD  HCD13-T19 |
| **SB#89/HC#161/SS#48 – O for a thousand tongues to sing (My Great Redeemer’s Praise)** | TB-59 – Azmon  TB-75 – Grimsby  HC-161  SS-48 | HTD3-T4 (4 vs.)  No HT CD  HCD15-T11 |
| **HC#128 – My Tribute** | HC-128 | HCD11-T18 |
| **HC#198 – In Jesus’ Name** | HC-198 | HCD18-T18 |
| **SB#358/HC#241/SS#30 – Crown Him with many crowns** | TB-162 – Diademata  HC-241  SS-30 | HTD1-T8 (4 vs.)  HCD23-T11 |
| **SB#1031/HC#283 – Lord, if Your presence** | TB-740 – same  HC-283 | No HT CD  HCD27-T13 |
| **SB#241 – And can it be** | TB-445 – Sagina | HTD4-T13 (4 vs.) |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Lent 2023 – Palm Sunday** | |
| **DRAMA**  **Beasts of Burden**  **By Martyn Scott Thomas**  © Copyright 2022 by Martyn Scott Thomas. All rights reserved. Used by permission. | |
| **Topic:** | The Triumphal Entry |
| **Scripture:** | Matthew 21:1-11 |
| **Synopsis:** | A man questions his wife about the disappearance of their animals. |
| **Characters:** | Samuel – an animal owner  Martha – his wife |
| **Props/Costumes:** | Biblical or modern dress. A broom for Martha. |
| **Setting:** | Bare stage. |
| **Running time:** | 4 minutes |

[*Martha is sweeping her house. Samuel enters.*]

**Martha:** [*looking up*] There you are. Where have you been? I was expecting you two hours ago.

**Samuel:** I was unavoidably detained.

**Martha:** What is that supposed to mean?

**Samuel:** Well, I was stuck in town, [*emphasizing*] and it wasn’t my fault.

**Martha:** [*suspiciously*] Were you at Jacob’s Inn again?

**Samuel:** No, really, I was stuck in town.

**Martha:** What could possibly be going on in town that would make you two hours late?

**Samuel:** You wouldn’t believe me if I told you.

**Martha:** Try me.

**Samuel:** A parade.

**Martha:** A parade? Is that the best you can come up with?

**Samuel:** But it’s the truth.

**Martha:** There hasn’t been a parade in Jerusalem in over twenty years. Why would there be one now?

**Samuel:** Actually, it was more of a procession. But it was pretty wild. It seemed like the whole town was there.

**Martha:** [*still suspicious*] And what was the occasion of this “procession”?

**Samuel:** It wasn’t a what, but a who.

**Martha:** Okay, I’ll bite. [*emphasizing*] Who was the center of attention?

**Samuel:** Jesus.

**Martha:** Jesus? As in Jesus of Nazareth?

**Samuel:** Yep.

**Martha:** He’s in Jerusalem all the time. Why would today be such a commotion?

**Samuel:** I don’t know. [*thinking*] It is right before Passover.

**Martha:** Well, there must be more to it. It’s not like he’s the king or anything.

**Samuel:** I can only tell you what I saw. And I found it very interesting.

**Martha:** So, tell me. What was so interesting?

**Samuel:** Well, first of all, the crowd was huge. And they were going crazy.

**Martha:** How so?

**Samuel:** As soon as they saw Jesus, they started throwing coats and palm branches on the road in front of him. And they were yelling and screaming.

**Martha:** What were they yelling?

**Samuel:** “Hosanna to the Son of David!” And “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

**Martha:** [*impressed*] You’d think he was the king.

**Samuel:** But that wasn’t the most interesting part.

**Martha:** Then what was?

**Samuel:** He was riding on the colt of a donkey.

**Martha:** [*a bit concerned*] Oh? That seems a bit odd.

**Samuel:** That’s what I thought.

**Martha:** [*trying to change the subject*] You must be famished. What would you like for dinner?

**Samuel:** [*sticking to his story*] And that colt looked amazingly just like Daisy.

**Martha:** That is really odd. [*again trying to change the subject*]. I was thinking fish for dinner. But I could make some soup if you’d like.

**Samuel:** And the donkey looked just like Lulu.

**Martha:** [*fanning herself*] Is it getting hot in here? Maybe we can just have some bread.

**Samuel:** So, I called out, [*calling out*] “Daisy!” “Lulu!” And they both stopped.

**Martha:** [*looking away*] Uh-oh!

**Samuel:** Martha, is there something you’d like to tell me?

**Martha:** [*cautiously*] Just after you left this morning, we may have had some visitors.

**Samuel:** May have?

**Martha:** And they may have asked if they could borrow Lulu and Daisy.

**Samuel:** May have?

**Martha:** And I may have let them take them.

**Samuel:** [*agitated*] Why would you do that?

**Martha:** Well, they said that the master needed them. I had no idea they were talking about Jesus.

**Samuel:** So, you just let some strangers take our donkey and colt?

**Martha:** [*repeating*] But the master needed them.

**Samuel:** And you didn’t think to ask who this master was?

**Martha:** I figured he must be important. He is the master, after all.

**Samuel:** Lucky for you I got stuck by that parade. After Jesus finished his route, I was able to get them back.

**Martha:** [*speaking quickly*] See. No problem. All’s well that ends well. How about some soup? [*exits*] I have some fresh vegetables in the garden.

**Samuel:** [*calling after her*] Martha! We’re not finished. Martha? Martha? [*pause*] I am kind of hungry. [*calling out again*] And can you make some bread, too? [*exits*]

[*Blackout*]

***THE EASTER CODE***

**Children’s Moment – Palm Sunday**

***Code Word:* Celebrate**

**April 2, 2023**

**by Katie Laidlaw**

**Synopsis:** The Code Word series focuses on 7 topics, from the perspective of scientists working in “The Code Lab” in order to find the secret ingredients to living out the power of the resurrection.

**Costume:** lab coat, goggles/glasses, gloves, mustache

**Set-up/Staging:** Small table or rolling cart with props.

**Props:** 2 balloons (1 regularly blown up, 1 blown up with 1-2 cups of water in it), large candle, lighter.

|  |
| --- |
| **Palm Sunday – Celebrate** |

**[*Invite children to come to the front, either having them stand or sit for the lesson.*** (I personally recommend having the children stand, as this helps keep them attentive, engaged, and involved in the lesson—especially with the dynamic of the congregation “watching them.” In this more public/formal setting, sitting provides a more relaxed/informal mindset, allowing the children to disengage and merely be present in the moment.)**]**

**Script:**

Welcome back! It is party day here in The Code Lab. I hope you are ready to CELEBRATE!

What kinds of things do you celebrate? [*Allow the children to respond*]

Those are all wonderful things to celebrate! But, WHY do we celebrate? [*Allow the children to respond*]

The world had been waiting for Jesus—the One who would save all people from their sins—for a very long time. When Jesus arrived in the city of Jerusalem, a full-on party happened because what God’s people had been waiting for had finally arrived! The arrival of Jesus was not like waiting for an Amazon package, or for your food at a restaurant. God’s people were waiting for new lives and transformed hearts. These are things money can’t buy!

Jesus’ disciples found Jesus a donkey to ride on into the city. People prepared for King Jesus by taking their own coats off to cover the dusty ground so He could enter the city like a king. The people in Jerusalem could not contain their excitement! They grabbed tree branches to wave and danced while shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem was a celebration! Jesus being born was a big deal, but this was even bigger! What people had been talking about for years was happening. The rumors were true! The Messiah was here! The people in Jerusalem could not contain their excitement.

Watch this!

[*Light the candle and hold the regular balloon over the flame (it will pop).*]

Sometimes, we let our excitement wear off. We are so ready for something, and make sure to prepare for it, but as soon as it happens, it becomes old news. Our excitement and celebration ends—it’s gone!

[*Hold the balloon with water in it over the flame – the flame should be under the portion with water. Don’t hold the balloon on the flame for too long… Show the kids the balloon’s contact with the flame a few times.*]

True celebration gives us joy that lasts. Celebrating Jesus should last! Jesus is worth celebrating every day and all the time, not just on Christmas, Palm Sunday and Easter.

John 15:11 (NLT) says, **“I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!”**

How can we celebrate Jesus every day? [*Allow the children to respond*]

Let’s celebrate Jesus every day by talking to Him, reading and knowing His word, and through sharing His love with others.

[*Pray.*]

**Main Points:**

* Sometimes we let our excitement wear off and get stuck in routine.
* True celebration produces joy that lasts.
* Jesus is worth celebrating every day.

**Questions:**

* What do you celebrate?
* Why do we celebrate?
* How can we celebrate Jesus every day?

***THE EASTER CODE***

**Lenten Sermon – Palm Sunday**

***Code Word:* Celebrate**

**April 2, 2023**

**By Major Catherine Mount**

**TITLE: *Code Word:* Celebrate**

**THEME: The Triumphal Entry**

**SCRIPTURE: Matthew 21:1-11**

**INTRODUCTION - TESTIMONY TIME**

What are you celebrating today? What is God doing in your life or showing you about Him? (Short and simple, please—one or maybe two sentences).

Do you know what we just did? We practiced the spiritual discipline of Celebration. What is celebration? Dictionaries will give you some definitions like the following:

* ***Dictionary.com*** says, “To celebrate is to observe (a day) or commemorate (an event) with ceremonies or festivities.
* ***Google*** tells us that to celebrate means the “action of marking one's pleasure at an important event or occasion by engaging in enjoyable, typically social, activity.”
* ***Merriam-webster* tells us that to celebrate is “**to perform (a sacrament or solemn ceremony) publicly and with appropriate rites.”

Isn’t that interesting? They all work as definitions, but they are a little different. So let me clarify for you today by giving you my own definition. Celebration is simple:

* **It is remembering and honoring something.**

And today in the church calendar, we pause to celebrate with Christians all over the world as we remember Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

**REMEMBER**

We REMEMBER the joy, the excitement, the momentum of Jesus ministry. We remember the “before,” those moments before tragedy and injustice, those moments before betrayal enter into the Easter story.

From the very beginning of the Bible, God is about celebrating. In fact, He essentially schedules parties (the Old Testament might call them FEASTS; FEASTS = party/celebration) into the calendar year. Why? To REMEMBER Him! To Celebrate Him! Think about it. He institutes the practice of the annual PASSOVER celebration to *remember* the exodus from Egypt. Because of our faith tradition rooted in the New Testament, we STILL celebrate Christmas and Easter as a REMEMBRANCE of who God is and what He has done. Do you see the pattern? Celebration is remembering. And it is an act of reverence and honor.

As we read today’s scripture. LOOK for what can be celebrated in this story we read.

**Matthew 21:1-6 [Read]**

(This story—the triumphal entry—is recorded in Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 19, and John 12)

**WHAT CAN BE CELEBRATED?** [vv. 1-6]

**Jesus calls and sends**!

Our Lord and Savior has a calling and mission for each of us. In this testimony of events, it’s as simple as two disciples:

1. 1st responding to a calling to follow Jesus, and
2. 2nd to be obedient in following Christ’s directions.

This might seem like a simple act of obedience, but it was incredibly important. In the accounts in Matthew and John the authors both quote the Old Testament scripture Zechariah 9:9, which says:

*“Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”*

The disciples’ act of obedience was the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy that was spoken nearly 500 years before that very day. Their obedience to respond to Jesus as master of their life, their specific obedience to GO and DO when He spoke—regardless of how crazy, or confusing the task—will forever be an example to each of us.

* WE can celebrate that God STILL calls us to follow.
* WE can celebrate that God STILL sends us to GO and to DO.

Let me ask you today: are your ears open? Are your feet and your hands willing? Jesus still calls, and He still sends. Are you willing?

**WHAT ELSE CAN WE CELEBRATE?**

**God provides**.

Can we just remember that and celebrate that FACT? He provides specifically for you and me, just what we need, at just the right moment.

Now, with our human logic it doesn’t always make sense to us. In that moment with the disciples, it probably didn’t make sense to them. We know this because in John’s telling of the story in John 12:16, he writes,

*“At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only* ***after*** *Jesus was* ***glorified*** *did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.”*

They did not understand the purpose of the task Jesus was assigning them, but they did learn that God would provide what Jesus was directing them to do. The story wouldn’t be the same if they came back with a camel.

I am wondering if any of you need to celebrate God’s provision today? Can you? Will you? Celebrate how God has provided for you. Maybe you don’t have the hindsight yet to understand His provision—the disciples didn’t understand until Jesus was glorified—but nevertheless, they were obedient. Let’s be disciples who know and understand and *celebrate* that God provides, even when we don’t understand.

**THERE IS SOMETHING ELSE WE CAN CELEBRATE** from today’s Word, and this I think is the most important lesson for us. **[Read Matthew 21:7-11]**

**What can we celebrate? Jesus Christ IS who He says He is.**

In *these* verses, who THEY say He is:

* He IS HOSANNA = “save, we pray”
* He IS the one and only Savior.
* He IS blessed.
* He DOES come in the name of the Lord.
* He IS ushering in the kingdom of God.
* He IS our Savior in the Highest.

This is something to CELEBRATE! The life. The death. The resurrection of Jesus Christ. He IS who He says He is and He DOES, and WILL DO, what He said He will do. This is the NUMBER ONE thing we can celebrate in our personal lives daily.

What is the *practical* way you can practice celebrating God? Take time in your moments of each day to REMEMBER who God is, and celebrate the TRUTH – that He is good, He is with you, He is holy, He is gracious. He cares. He knows... oh, He knows. He knows your burden. And he is with you. Maybe you need to remember that today, because for some people listening, it’s really, really hard to celebrate anything at all.

Turn with me to Luke 19 because it'll give us some insight into this situation. Starting with verse 37, because I want you to know that as we celebrate Jesus teaches us something about celebrating - even when it's difficult.

**Luke 19:37-44 [Read]**

Jesus is coming into the city, they are praising him, it's a party atmosphere, and the whole thing is exciting. Yet, Jesus comes to the city and looks over the hill and he is broken and weeping because he *knows* that so many people will miss it! They miss the point that Jesus is the King! Not the political Messiah they were looking for, but he is the king who forgives sins, who saves, who transforms, who changes the world. And yet he looks over the beloved city of God and he weeps, because he knows there will be those who turn away. He knows the city will be destroyed. He must have experienced some kind of dismay that although he just heard all these shouts of *Hosanna!,* that in a matter of days he would be hearing shouts of *Crucify!.*

Sometimes celebration is more about the honoring than the party. If that's the situation you find yourself in today, you still get to celebrate. You still get to look for and find and experience joy. Sometimes that's mixed in with lament, and grief, and loss. But that's okay—we still celebrate! Not to ignore those feelings or those circumstances, but we celebrate because we remember that God is *still* calling, He is *still* sending, He's *still* working, He *still* is who He says He is, even if you've been disappointed, or hurt, or if you're confused, or if you don't understand. He knows you. He loves you. He does not change.

As we conclude this season of Lent next week, going into Holy Week, I want you to consider:

How are you unlocking this code word: Celebrate? How are you going to celebrate in the remembering and the honoring this week? How are you going to celebrate the discipline of celebration?

If you are hurting, how will you celebrate? If you’re grieving, how will you celebrate? How are you going to *regularly* remember and honor who God is and what He is doing?

**CHALLENGE**

* How are you practicing the discipline of celebration in your every day?
* How are you regularly REMEMBERING the call that Jesus has placed on your life to be a disciple?
* How are you regularly celebrating God’s provision?
* How are you regularly celebrating that God IS who HE says He is?

When we celebrate it draws us nearer to Him.

Celebration takes commitment – it takes ACTION on our part – and we see an incredible act of celebration in today’s scripture. What do the people do in **Matthew 21:8? [Read]**

*“Many people spread their cloaks (or garments) on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields.”*

This may seem trivial, but it is not. They made a path of honor for a king. They laid their cloaks on the ground. A cloak was a typical type of garment worn by almost everyone at the time. It could be used for warmth, for carrying items to be sold, it could signify wealth, or prestige (or lack thereof). It was an everyday garment, but it was a garment that identified them, and it is was important. And these men and women laid theirs down on a path to be walked on by a donkey carrying the Messiah.

In remembering this beautiful story in our church history, I couldn’t help but think about the cloak that I would lay down if I knew Jesus was walking through our doors today. My most precious garment that I wear is my tunic. It signifies my calling, my vocation, the legacy of my family, my heritage, and—believe me—I would think twice about laying it on the floor, let alone on a dusty road in Jerusalem! But do you see the symbolism of laying down our cloaks? Our most precious *earthly* things? God is calling us to PARTICIPATE in the celebration. He says, “Lay down your most precious thing that you cling to and lift your eyes up to the King.”

Sometimes the best way to celebrate is to lay down what we care about most, or that thing we are holding onto so tightly that it prevents us from making time and space, to REMEMBER—to celebrate—that God calls us, He sends us, He provides for us, and above all, HE is who He says He is.

Let’s take time today to celebrate; to focus our minds/hearts/souls on Christ the King, and to lay down that garment, those precious things that might distract us from remembering.