

Holy, Wholly**Sunday, March 28, 2021 || 6th Sunday of Lent (Palm Sunday) || Pastor Christy Wright**

We invite you to light a candle at 9:30 AM and join us in prayer ONLINE or over the PHONE

Audio worship, including music, prayers, and the sermon is available at

<https://georgewhitefieldumc.weebly.com/worship-services>

Audio worship is also available at (978) 990-5000, access code 719365#. Just dial in, enter the access code on your keypad, and you will hear the service begin with music.

This Lenten Series is adapted from Marcia McFee's Holy Vessels curriculum.

Prelude

O Worship the King

Melissa Quilitzsch

Announcements**Palm Sunday Narrative**

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, "Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey." The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

Opening Hymn

Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

UMH 278

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.

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!

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.

Introduction - Marcia McFee

We have seen that the stories of Jesus' healing ministry are filled with words and deeds. When he rode into Jerusalem, the people had hopes he would heal the oppressive system they were living under. We know that his healing was not confined to that moment in history, but offers a new way of life that has made a case for compassion for all, especially "the least," ever since. As we head into the events of Holy Week, we begin to see that our ability to forgive ourselves and others is the foundation that can transform infirmities and allow us to move on. We integrate our beliefs and actions for the health of the whole. The parade of compassionate power we celebrate today is underscored by another healing story of transformation, symbolizing our ability to fuel our movement of recovery. We glorify God for beautiful words and works of wholeness and share that treasured beauty with others. We know there will still be pain, but we also know love will win.

We have approached confession each week in Lent in such a way that we lay bare the brokenness in order to begin the process of healing. Along the way we have acknowledged our need to restore our own Holy Vessels while attending to our role in the healing of the community and the world. The work of healing will continue as we integrate all we have learned with all that we will do moving forward. For now, we remember how hard it is to move from thinking to doing.

Let us pray: Forgiving God, We have opened ourselves to healing and sometimes it is easier to pray nice prayers than to do the hard work of putting into action what needs to happen. Help us remember the sacred nature of the holy vessels that we are, fragile and susceptible to shattering and yet capable of transformation. Help us to see ourselves as you see us. Help us to believe in our ability to change and heal as you believe in us. Help us, Healer. Show us our strength. Forgive our inertia. Move us to move one step at a time toward greater care. In this silence, we sense and acknowledge

our yearning for wholeness. Know this: You are never alone in the struggle. No. Matter. What. Jesus is on the journey with us. Life's parade is not passing you by. You are part of this Body of Christ, a community seeking healing. For you, for me, for all. Take a deep breath in to let this truth fill you...and breathe out with the relief of assurance.

Vessels, holy and whole. Broken, needing the One. Open, body and soul. Healer, come.

Scripture Reading - Matthew 9:1-8

And after getting into a boat Jesus crossed the sea and came to his own town. And just then some people were carrying a paralyzed man lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." Then some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." But Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he then said to the paralytic—"Stand up, take your bed and go to your home." And he stood up and went to his home. When the crowds saw it, they were filled with awe, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to human beings.

Sermon - Pastor Christy Wright

Have you ever been a part of a parade? I'm reminded of high school when I was part of the marching band. Every year we would play at our Memorial Day Parade as it wended through the fairgrounds, across two major roads, and down to the high school. It was always a lot of fun - but boy was it hard work! We'd be wearing heavy wool marching uniforms, carrying our instruments, and attempting to stay in time while playing memorized music with dozens of other musicians. But there were some exciting parts of the day too - we'd often get a bunch of free candy from other parade walkers, and there would usually be a simple BBQ lunch of hot dogs and hamburgers waiting for us at the high school when we returned. But my favorite part? Walking past my family and friends, who were cheering me on from the sidewalk. What a great memory, one filled with love and encouragement.

This morning's readings, both of the infamous Palm Sunday procession and of the healing story we just read, contain parades of their own. Jesus' entrance to Jerusalem was widely celebrated, but so was the man who was healed. In our second reading, Jesus approached a man who was paralyzed, and encouraged him in the forgiveness of his sins - but Jesus was challenged by onlookers who believe Jesus was taking too much authority. Who was he to forgive sins? Jesus went a step further; rather than arguing with them, he looked after the paralyzed man's physical health too - and he was now able to walk! This had become a parade of its own - one in which the paralyzed man got up, took his mat, and went home - surrounded by crowds of encouragement and awe-struck passersby.

As we reflect over our journey this Lenten season, may we recognize the healing in our midst and the ways in which Jesus has been present with us from day one. May we seek healing that touches every part of our lives: our spiritual healing, our mental healing, the healing of our bodies, and the healing of our communities. And above all else, may we recognize from where the healing comes: from Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior in whose love and encouragement we walk each day.

Hymn of Meditation

Trust and Obey

UMH 467

*1. When we walk with the Lord in the light of God's word,
What a glory God sheds on our way!
While we do God's good will, God abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.*

*3. But we never can prove the delights of God's love
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favor God shows, for the joy God bestows,
Are for them who will trust and obey.*

Refrain: Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

*2. Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share,
But our toil God doth richly repay;
Not a grief or a loss, not a frown or a cross,
But is blest if we trust and obey.*

*4. Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at God's feet,
Or we'll walk by God's side in the way;
What God says we will do, where God sends we will go;
Never fear, only trust and obey.*

Prayer of Meditation - Marcia McFee

Healer of our every ill, especially when we find it difficult to believe or trust that sorrow will end, we come before you to make our petitions known. Hear our cries for healing of body, mind, and spirit. We know that already you are at work among us, showing us the way to recovery from the toxicities and grief of our time. Even when we cannot seem to believe it, we know that you see beauty in our brokenness. We pray especially for those who feel there is no end to sorrow, that no matter what we do or how hard we work to bring peace and justice to our world, it feels like we cannot gain traction. We give thanks that when we cannot bring ourselves to the healing source of your love, there are others

around us that, through words and actions, bring us hope once again. Help to also be those who offer hope when we have the opportunity on this parade of compassion called life. We pray this day for...

In Our Prayers. Thanksgiving for: the gifts that make ministry possible, medical professionals and researchers. Holding in our hearts: those experiencing unemployment, those facing racial injustice and violence and cannot breathe under the weight of oppression, especially for our Asian and Pacific Island community, for our world as we continue to combat gun violence, for our congregation as we grieve the loss of loved ones (particularly for the Armitage family and loved ones of Mandy; for the Frazier family in the loss of Barbara; and for John and the Toppin family and loved ones in the loss of Priscilla), those experiencing illness or health issues - especially those who are ill with Covid-19, and (for Al (and family as they care for him), Brad S., Dan D. (Vicki's husband), Kelly R., Lindsey S., Peter M.), those in nursing homes or extended care facilities (Betty, Claire), those caring for others (Carrie G., Crystal, Rachel), the United Methodist Church. *Note that this list will renew each month.*

Commissioning and Benediction - Marcia McFee

In this series, we have seen that Jesus' healing actions often get "buzz" from onlookers. This day we have seen two different reactions from the crowd: shouts of adoration and the scoff of judgment from religious officials. His words and actions seemed to get one or the other—praise or accusations of heresy. But he continued his work anyway. He loved those that were deemed unlovable. He proclaimed healing in the midst of despair. He urged people to give their best in the midst of the worst circumstances. To be followers of Jesus is not an easy task. But it is the way that we become whole once again... to participate in the holy endeavor of bringing the kin-dom on earth as it is in heaven. And as we enter Holy Week, these themes will come into sharp focus. May we follow him, even to the broken places. We have asked this question each week: How can we as a church community become a "health hub" through our ministry and mission? Let us discern together how we can meet the needs of those within our community.

Now go with confidence that God is making us whole and holy, recovering our depth of love for all and our joy of living in this world. May the words of Jesus ring in your ears: "Take heart." And may the Spirit hover, move, and deliver salve to your soul and a spring in your step. Amen.

Postlude

Journey's End

Melissa Quilitzsch

Community Announcements

- **Maundy Thursday Home Worship Service, April 1st.** Be on the lookout for a guided Maundy Thursday Home Worship Service that is enclosed this week along with our regular service. Designed to be a meditation for dinner time on Thursday, April 1st, we will reflect on Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples. This will be an at-home self-guided meditation.
- **Sunrise Easter Service!** We're very excited to announce our ecumenical Sunrise Easter Service with First Congregational Church of West Brookfield and Brookfield UCC to take place **outside** at the First Congo in WB at **6:15 AM on Sunday, April 4th**. Masks and social distancing will be observed. Bring your lawn chairs!
- **IN-PERSON OUTDOOR WORSHIP TO RESUME: Update from the Reopening Advisory Board.** The Board met last week, and we are excited to announce that in-person outdoor worship services will resume **weekly on Sunday, April 11th** at 9:30 AM on the Charmil Drive Green, weather permitting. Regardless of vaccination status, **masks and social distancing are required** in order to limit our risk factors. Remember to bring your lawn chair! Should weather become a concern, Pastor Christy will begin a phone chain by Saturday at 4 PM prior to the service. Indoor worship possibilities are still being explored. As always, if you have any questions, suggestions, or concerns about in-person worship, feel free to reach out to anyone on the Reopening Advisory Board: Jane Dolan, Tom McKeon, Diane Mundell, Melissa Quilitzsch, or Pastor Christy.
- **Heifer Project Total.** Thank you all so much for donating toward the Heifer Project! We have received a total of \$243.10, \$55 of which has already been donated, which leaves us with \$188.10 to decide on which animals we can support. Here are our options: (1) Goat \$120 (2) Pig \$120 (3) Sheep \$120 (4) Alpaca \$150 (5) Duck \$20 (6) Honeybees \$30 (7) Hope Basket of Rabbits & Chicks \$50 (8) Flock of Chicks \$20. Please let Pastor Christy know of your preferences by April 15th; otherwise, we will donate as a monetary donation. Thank you!
- **Upcoming Transition.** We invite you to be in prayer as the Staff Parish Relations Committee works with our District Superintendent Rev. Megan Stowe to discern our next pastor, to be appointed on July 1st, 2021.
- **Prayer Chain.** As a church, we are a wonderful community of prayer. When a need arises, we send it through the prayer chain so we can all meditate together. If you would like to be a part of this prayer chain, reach out to Jane Dolan, who will put you on the list.
- **Pastor Christy's Office Hours: APRIL & MAY.** Pastor Christy's office hours have shifted to **Mondays** and **Tuesdays** from 8 AM to 4 PM and **Thursdays** from 8 AM to 12 noon. If you have an emergency outside of office hours, please call her cell phone, leave a message, and she will get back to you as soon as possible.

(508) 867-3667

(860) 908-7531

pastorchristygwumc@gmail.com

- **THANK YOU for your continued generous donations to the work of the church!** We are so grateful for your gifts, for they make an impact near and far. As a reminder, you can mail your offerings to PO Box 576, West Brookfield, MA 01585. Thank you!

Sonshine Phone Calls and Cards List

If you know of anyone who could be added to our Sonshine list, let Pastor Christy know.

Betty Hubbard

47 E Main St.

West Brookfield, MA 01585

Kelly Rice

98 Lake Shore Drive

West Brookfield, MA 01585

Claire Wirf

(508) 791-8131 (mornings)

838 Mill Street

Worcester, MA 01602

Daily Devotionals

Refuge: A Guided Lent Devotional by Rev. Kelsey Beebe

The Upper Room Daily Devotionals official magazines are still being distributed.

If you would like a copy, please let Pastor Christy know.

Monday, March 29th through Saturday, April 3rd || Written by Rev. Kelsey Beebe

We invite you to light a candle at 9:30 AM daily, meditate on our given scripture, and join us in prayer

Monday, March 29th, 2021

Read John 12:12-13

In our final week of Lent – Holy Week – we begin our Monday with a SHIFT. For many of us, today may feel like every other Monday. This week may feel the same as any other week. But it is not. It is the week we hold sacred as a time for remembering and honoring Jesus' life, ministry, birth, death, and everything in between, leading up to his resurrection. As you do this S.H.I.F.T. practice one last time this season, I pray that it brings you into the sacredness of this week. May it draw your heart closer to Jesus, the man who walked this earth and breathed this air; the man who is God with us. May we journey with him this week as we journey towards the cross. In your journal, reflect on the following questions:

- Where are you finding the SACRED in your life? Or in other words, where do you see God at work in your life?
 - What is giving you HOPE?
 - What has INSPIRED you lately?
 - What FILLED your cup last week?
 - What are you THANKFUL for?

If you are feeling stuck, refer back to the first week of Lent when we first did this practice for an example.

Tuesday, March 30th, 2021

Read John 12:35-36

I often wonder what it might have been like to be alive during Jesus' time and living near where he did his ministry. Would

I have gathered with the crowds to hear him teach? Would I have joined the other women, like Mary and Martha, and followed him? Would I have stood in awe wondering, "Who is this man?" or would I have stood in judgment saying, "Who does this guy think he is?!" If he walked up to my brothers and I while fishing with our father for our livelihood, would I have immediately dropped my nets and followed him? If I had followed and believed, how would I have responded when Jesus told me he would soon die on a cross at the hands of the state? Would I be angry? Would my doubt strengthen to the point where I wondered if he really was the messiah? Truthfully, I do not know the answers to those questions. I would like to think that I would follow and believe, but I know that – even as a pastor – sometimes doubt creeps in. However, what I know for sure is that Jesus did walk this earth and he did something so divinely transformative that his band of twelve men and however many women have extended to where I am today. His light was so powerful that nothing in this world has ever overtaken it. And so, on my best days, I believe in the light and I follow it. Even when I have no idea where

I am going, I continue on the path, trusting that God is with me. My guiding light are the teachings, love, and grace of Christ, and I will follow that the rest of my days. Today, reflect in your journal: Would you have followed Jesus if you were alive when he was? What do you think you would do? If you were there with him and the disciples in his final days, how would you feel? What might you have said to him?

Wednesday, March 31st, 2021

Read Romans 12:12

When I was in youth group we would receive these little devotional magazines made for teens. In one of the editions, there was a whole section on "how to pray." They offered a variety of suggestions, but the two that have stayed with me are what

I have come to call "time prayers" and "arrow prayers." Time Prayers are prayers I say at a certain time of day. For example, when a clock reads 9:11, I say a prayer for all the victims and their families of the 9/11 attacks, and for everyone who has been affected by the repercussions of that horrific day. Or, when the clock reads 11:11, I say a prayer for someone hoping for something – like a friend trying to get pregnant, or another who is looking for a job. Arrow Prayers are not that

different from Time Prayers. They are quick 30-second prayers I lift up when the thought comes to me. For example, I might be driving and see something that reminds me of someone I know who is going through a hard time so I will quickly pray, “God please be with _____, let them know they are loved.” Or when I hear sirens go by, I might pray something like, “God be with those people as they go to serve, and be with those they are serving. May all be well.” We all have different ways to pray. I invite you to try these two types of prayers on for a day or two. Think of a time on the clock that can correspond with something important – maybe it is 4:29 for your nephew who was born on April 29th, or 6:12 to honor and pray for those who died during the Pulse shooting on June 12th, 2016. Whatever it is, write it down the time(s) in your journal and who or what you will pray for at that time. Then, as you go about your days, lift up little time and arrow prayers as they come to you.

Thursday, April 1st, 2021

Read John 13:1-17, 31-35

This is our final day for using lectio divina. As you enter into today’s practice, I invite you to take a moment and reflect on how this practice has gone for you. Has it changed how you read scripture? My hope is that lectio divina has given you an easier, more accessible way to engage with a book that can feel intimidating or hard to understand at times. I also pray it has shown you the ways that God is still speaking to us – to you – through these ancient pages. Here are the steps to follow as you enter into this practice one more time:

1. Prepare: Take a moment and close your eyes. Breathe deeply through your nose. Pray for God to open your heart, ears, and mind. Ask God to speak to you and help you listen for whatever it is God needs you to hear.
2. Read: Read John 13:1-17, 31-35 three times. As you read, rather than trying to dissect the passage intellectually, just experience it. The first time through, simply read through it. The second time, notice what words or phrases catch your eye, intrigue you, or speak to your heart. The third time, underline or circle the words or phrases that stood out to you.
3. Meditate/Pray: In your journal, write down the word or phrase that stood out to you the most. Take a moment to close your eyes and repeat that word or phrase to yourself a few times. Maybe ask what God is saying to you through this passage. Notice what comes up as you do this: thoughts, memories, feelings. Listen for the Holy Spirit.
4. Contemplate: In your journal, write down what came up for you during your prayer and meditation.
Note what you hear God saying to you through this scripture.

Be sure to check out the enclosed Maundy Thursday Home Worship Service for a self-guided meditation this evening.

Friday, April 2nd, 2021

Read John 19:25-30

The phrase “It is finished” is one that always resonates in my spirit on Good Friday. There is such finality in death. Even in the death of Jesus on the cross. It feels dark and bleak. Like there is nothing left. “It is finished.” Today, rather than write in your journal, I invite you to lie down somewhere. If you are able, lie on your back (if that causes low-back pain, bend your knees and set your feet flat on the ground a little wider than your hips and let your knees knock together to lean on one another). Close your eyes. Reflect on that phrase, “It is finished.” Notice how it feels in your body as you repeat that phrase to yourself in your mind, almost like a mantra. Feel your weight and your gravity sink down. Calm your breath.

After a minute or two, open your eyes and notice how your spirit feels.

If you would like, write the phrase “It is finished” in your journal.

Saturday, April 3rd, 2021

Read Job 14:7-9

Today is the day the world waits in darkness. It can feel like all the life in the world has been sucked out. But that is why this passage from Job stood out to me today. Even when a tree is cut down, there is still hope. After my mother passed away, someone told me about grandmother stumps. When a tree falls or is cut down, the stump is left in the ground. It may appear to wither up or die, but at some point, something miraculous happens – there will be a little bit of green.

Perhaps it is moss, or maybe it sprouts a flower, or becomes a den for a fox. That tree that we thought had died has produced new life. I know, deep in my heart, that from my mother’s death new life has sprung forth. That is the promise of the Gospel. My friend, on Holy Saturday, it is important not to rush too quickly to Easter. It is important to sit with the fear and anguish that the disciples felt that day thousands of years ago. There is nothing worse, in the midst of grief, than being told “It’ll be okay!” or “This happened for a reason!” But my prayer for you today is that as you experience the heavy reality of death and grief, that you can also feel just a tinge of holy expectation – that at the sent of water, that space of emptiness will bud and produce sprouts of life like a plant. May the grace of that hope be your refuge.

Sacred Moments**Thursday, April 1st, 2021 || Maundy Thursday || Pastor Christy Wright**

We invite you to light a candle this evening as you sit down to dinner and join us in prayer and reflection on this Maundy Thursday, the Thursday before Easter.

Invitation

As we join together around the table, though in our separate homes and distant places, we invite the Holy Spirit to be a part of our gathering, near and far. As we gather our glasses, plates, bowls, and utensils, may we do so in a prayerful spirit, one of thanksgiving and reflection, of remembrance and gratitude.

Grace - John O'Donohue

As we begin this meal with grace, let us become aware of the memory carried inside the food before us: the quiver of the seed awakening in the earth, unfolding in a trust of roots and slender stems of growth, on its voyage toward harvest, the kiss of rain and surge of sun; the innocence of animal soul that never spoke a word, nourished by the earth to become today our food; the work of all the strangers whose hands prepared it, that privilege of wealth and health that enables us to feast and celebrate. Amen.

I invite you to partake in your meal as you read the story of the first Maundy Thursday and reflect upon its meaning.

The Story - Luke 22:14-30

When the hour came, Jesus took his place at the table and the apostles with him. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!" Then they began to ask one another which one of them it could be who would do this.

A dispute also rose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. But Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves."

"You are those who have stood by me in my trials; and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on the thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Reflection Questions

Who is welcome at the table? Even Judas was invited to the table, who would later betray Jesus. And even Peter, who would deny him. Are all truly welcome at our own tables?

What do we inherit from this feast? From this last meal with Jesus?

What are we called to remember?

Grace - John O'Donohue

We end this meal with grace for the joy and nourishment of food, the slowed time away from the world to come into presence with each other, even from a distance, and sense the subtle lives behind our faces, the different colors of our voices, the edges of hungers we keep private, the circle of love that unites us. We pray the wise spirit who keeps us to change the structures that make others hunger and that after such grace we might now go forth and impart dignity wherever we partake. Amen.