



**FOUR CORNERS COMMUNITY CHAPEL  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

200 Angell Road, Cumberland, Rhode Island 02864

*"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."*

Isaiah 43:1-3

**Pastor – Reverend David Pierce**

**Organist – Mr. Vance Westgate**

*Home Worship Liturgy*

*April 5, 2020*





## **CALL TO WORSHIP—*Adapted from "Passion Sunday"***

Today we enter Holy Week, with its cycle of life, death, and new life.

Jesus, the holy one, the whole one, enters Jerusalem on the back of a donkey.

Jesus, holy one, enters the gates of our hearts today as we shout, "Hosanna! Blessed is the God who comes to save us!"

Jesus, holy one, open our eyes and ears to the guiding of your Holy Spirit who calls us to love justice, do kindly, and walk humbly with God.

Hosanna! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest heaven. Hosanna in all the earth.



## **SCRIPTURE READING— *Luke 19:29-39***

“When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, “Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it.’” So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” They said, “The Lord needs it.” Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying,

“Blessed is the king  
who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Peace in heaven,  
and glory in the highest heaven!”

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”



## HYMN—“*Blessed Be Your Name*”

Blessed be your name  
In the land that is plentiful  
Where Your streams of abundance flow  
Blessed be your name

Blessed be your name  
When I'm found in the desert place  
Though I walk through the wilderness  
Blessed be your name

Every blessing you pour out, I'll  
Turn back to praise  
When the darkness closes in, Lord  
Still I will say

### *Chorus:*

Blessed be the name of the Lord  
Blessed be your name  
Blessed be the name of the Lord  
Blessed be your glorious name

Blessed be your name  
When the sun's shining down on me  
When the world's all as it should be  
Blessed be your name

Blessed be Your name  
On the road marked with suffering  
Though there's pain in the offering  
Blessed be your name [*Chorus*]

### *Bridge:*

You give and take away  
You give and take away  
My heart will choose to say  
Lord, blessed be your name

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## **SERMON - “Hear the stones? They’re listening for you”**

Rev. David Pierce

Some of the Pharisees who were in the crowd said to Jesus, “Order your disciples to stop.” But Jesus said to them, “I tell you, if they stop, the stone will cry out.”

What was it that the Pharisees, these religious teachers wanted Jesus’ disciples to stop doing on that first Palm Sunday? They wanted them to stop praising. They wanted them to stop going up and down the streets of Jerusalem shouting after Jesus, “Hosanna! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.”

What is it, though, about praise that is so bothersome, threatening, harmful? Nothing really, unless it’s going to someone you don’t especially want to see it go to, someone you maybe don’t think deserves to get praise.

This may have been part of it for the Pharisees. As teachers themselves, they have dedicated their lives to their craft. They went to school, jumped through all the required hoops to land the best internship. They wrote the thesis paper, they earned the degree that hangs in their home office. But more than all this, they have done so believing that right teaching leads to right living. So they have talked the talk and walked the walk. Ask a Pharisee who God is and they won’t only tell you, they will show you where and with whom God hangs out on Saturday night.

When they meet Jesus, they can’t deny that he, like them, is a teacher with authority. “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” He has a following of students, he keeps a moral code, he too walks the walk, but that walk takes him to a different place than they go to on Saturday night.

*This man* dines with sinners! his fellow teachers bark to one another. *This man* hangs out with lepers, gets close enough to touch them! *This man* casts out demons, he must be a demon himself! *This man* let’s his disciples pick grain on the Sabbath because they’re hungry, even though they should be resting! *This man* lets the crowds shout ‘Hosanna! Praise God! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.

“Teacher, make them stop. Tell them, this is not what the blessedness of God looks like.”

I think what really got to the Pharisees was that this praise was coming from a place they’d never heard it come from before. They were used to hearing it come from within their own temples, from within their pews and pulpits. That’s where praise begins, and where it belongs. But this praise was coming from the people, and they weren’t in any temple or pew. They were in the streets, in their neighborhoods, in their homes. And the sound of this praise

rising up from such ordinary, unexpected places turns the Pharisees' world upside down on them. They have no way to understand how it's possible for the praises of God to live so freely and fully outside in the world. It rattles their way of thinking and believing so much that they order Jesus to make it stop. But Jesus tells them, you can't stop it. Like God and grace and love, it's in the very nature of praise to be out there, to be shared, to be heard. If we try to stop it, the stones will cry out in protest, and they will take up where we have left off.

If there is good news for us in our world today, this has to be it: you can't stop praise. Though our temples and mosques and churches are all closed. Though our ballparks and playgrounds are all shut down and there are no players to cheer for. Though all our TV shows have been relegated to reruns and there are no awards to hand out for best actor and actress right now. Though all the news seems to be bad news, as long as there are rocks, there is praise, and so there is good news.

I was deeply concerned this past week, and rather shocked, to hear the rumors, which then became news, that individual states were going to be allowed to decide for themselves whether to consider religious services "essential services" in their state, which would essentially allow them to remain open to the public during this time. It raised the question for me of what is essential to the well-being of my life, my family, my community, and my faith right now. And while I would not presume to speak for anyone else, my read on Jesus this morning is that one of the reasons the Pharisees did not care for him and his disciples is because he did not consider location essential to praise and worship. On the other hand, he did consider location essential to healing and wholeness. Read the gospels and almost anytime he meets someone who has been isolated from their community on account of being sick, after he heals them, he sends them back to their community. Because while it is one thing to have our bodies cured, healing requires being welcomed back into the fold again. Don't worry my friends, our day will come.

In the meantime, I want to share with you this morning three things that are feeling essential to my life right now, three things that are keeping me intact—mind, body, and soul.

The first thing that is keeping me afloat right now is dirt, which is nothing more than—yep, you guessed it—ground up rocks. This pile of dirt is left-over from our Ash Wednesday service this year. I brought him home from my office a couple weeks ago. That probably feels like a long time ago now, but it was only 5 weeks ago; just before all this got started. On that day, we poured out this dirt and proclaimed, "We are dust, and to dust we shall return." That's it—nothing fancy, nothing special, just plain, brown dusty dirt. The thing I have since come to discover about dirt, though, is that it has an amazing capacity to absorb water.

It reminds me of the story of Noah. After coming through the flood—40 days and nights of hardcore downpour—he dropped the ramp on the ark and stepped out into a world where pretty much everything that was there before was totally destroyed. The houses were all

rubble, the people all corpses, the trees all twigs, and the only thing that still looked the same was the dirt and rocks. It has an amazing capacity to absorb the hardness of this world, which is why I believe God used it to make us. On this Palm Sunday, the dirt and rocks remind me that we are still here because God is still here, and so we have something to shout about, to give thanks and praise for.

The second thing that is keeping me afloat these days are my poetry books. About a month ago, when I realized I was going to be working from home for a while, I ran down to my office one day with my tote bag that carries whatever books I need to have that week for sermon writing and counseling. At that time, my tote bag was filled with commentaries and books on the politics of Jesus. I turned them all in for something more useful—poetry. Among my favorites is Mary Oliver and her poem, “The Poet Thinks About The Donkey.”

On the outskirts of Jerusalem  
the donkey waited.  
Not especially brave, or filled with understanding,  
he stood and waited.

*How horses, turned out in the meadow,  
leap with delight!  
How doves, released from the cages,  
clatter away, splashed with sunlight!*

But the donkey, tied to a tree as usual, waited.  
Then he let himself be led away.  
Then he let the stranger mount him.

Never had he seen such crowds!  
And I wonder if the donkey all imagined what was to happen.  
Still, he was what he had always been: small, dark, obedient.

I hope, finally, he felt brave.  
I hope, finally, he loved the man who rode so lightly upon him,  
As he lifted one dusty hoof and stepped, as he had to, forward.<sup>1</sup>

The donkey lifts one dusty hoof and steps, as he has to, forward. What a perfect model for the times we are in. When we cannot make the sickness and disease go away over night, when we do not know if the bank account is going to hold up, when we do not know how we will survive 1 more day of homeschooling and homeworking, when death feels like it’s right there at the door, let us walk bravely with the donkey and take just one step at a time. For remember, like

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<sup>1</sup> From her book, *Thirst*, p. 44.

us, the donkey did not know what kind of world awaited him up ahead, but it was enough that he was not alone. For he had been chosen and loved by Jesus.

Finally, the third thing that is keeping me afloat today, that feels essential right now to my well-being, my faith, and my church, is my kitchen table and the bread that somehow continues to come to me so easily each day.

This was to be a Communion Sunday for us, where we would have gathered at the table of God and shared in the body and blood of Christ given for us. While we cannot do that so easily, in many ways this still is a day of communion. As you sit at your tables today, may the bread you break be common, reminding you that Jesus welcomed everybody, and especially anybody who was nobody, to share in his table and ministry with him. And may the cup you pour be full, reminding you that the forgiveness of God will always be enough.

A pile of dust, a donkey that carries a gentle Savior who comes with justice to overturn our world and reorder it in love, bread broken for you, forgiveness poured out for you—my friends, these are the gifts of God for you, the people of God.

Hosanna! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in all the earth.

Amen.

### **SERMON QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES**

Take a walk around your home and yard today and make a list of the things you see that you had no hand in creating. How do these things express praise and thanks?

Consider your list. What value do these things bring to our world and to your life? In what ways are you dependent upon these things for your daily, continued existence? In what ways are they dependent upon you for their continued existence?

In the last month, what parts of your home, work, and family life have you discovered are not as “essential” as you once thought they were?

In the last month, how have you seen yourself and the world around you become more creative? More hopeful? More helpful?

Who and what are you remembering in your prayers today? Consider using the space left on this page to write a prayer to God that comes from the vantage point of the Palm Sunday donkey.



## PRAYER REQUESTS

*Let us remember the following people in our prayers this week:*

For the Michalski family on the sudden and recent passing of Tiffany's father

All those who have been affected by the coronavirus outbreak

*The healthcare providers who are risking their own health being on the front lines so they can treat the sick*

Anna Brandenburg-Schroeder, Lea Dau's sister

Lisa Fabianski, friend of Diane and Wade Richmond

Bob Gilson

Cameron Hewey

George Labonte

David Lamontagne

Karli Lamontagne

Jason Nelson, nephew of Deb Dennis

Hailey Rhilinger, granddaughter of Steve and Kathy Huftalen

Lindsay-Rae, daughter of Jim and Brenda Verdoia

Joe Machado is requesting prayers for Jake Crane, Joe Resendes,

Aunt Alice, Cousin Gail, Lucy Gaspar, and family and friends

Please pray for our Chapel members and friends in nursing homes:

Joe Chopy, Bill Glenney, Irene Smith, Ruth and Fredrick Hooks

*If you would like to have a name added to this weekly list of prayers, or if you*

*know that a name you added can now be removed, please*

*email the office at [office@fourcornerschapel.org](mailto:office@fourcornerschapel.org)*

*or call the Church Office at (401) 333-6171.*

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CHURCH MODERATOR: LYNNE VAUDRY

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## HOW TO KEEP IN TOUCH

Based on the latest recommendations from the Governor and the Rhode Island Department of Health, we will be suspending all public Sunday services, along with all church-related activities, until further notice. This decision does not mean that the work and community of our church will be stopped, or even slowed down, at all. We will continue to work creatively and intentionally to partner with and financially support our various mission efforts both locally and globally, knowing how important it is to provide for the least among us at this time especially. In addition, our Deacons are working to keep us connected by providing congregational care through weekly phone calls. Church At Home services will continue online. Be sure also to tune in during Holy Week for our Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services. Both will be made available online. Please check back to our website ([fourcornerschapel.org](http://fourcornerschapel.org)) regularly for updates.

During these uncertain times, should you need assistance in some way, please contact the church office or Pastor David. We take it as our calling from God to do what we can to provide for each other's needs as best we can. Our Chapel office is now operating remotely. Phone messages will be checked during the week, so please continue to call the office at 401-333-6171 if you have any questions or concerns, and leave a message. Please note that your call may not be returned immediately.

Likewise, you may also reach out to us via email by contacting us at [office@fourcornerschapel.org](mailto:office@fourcornerschapel.org), as email will also be checked throughout the week.

We will continue to use Constant Contact to reach out to you via group emails. If you have not signed up to receive "Down on the Corner" electronic newsletters, please visit our website and click the blue banner at the bottom of the home page to sign up.

In addition to our electronic newsletter, we will also be providing updates through the Chapel's Facebook page.

