

## Palm Sunday

Gracious God may these words be words of inspiration and hope. Amen

### BELLY DANCING

When I first moved to Northeast, I was invited to take belly dancing classes. I remember practicing the same steps, hip and arm movements again and again. My teacher said to our class “I’m doing this so that you will develop muscle memory. Without thinking about it, you will just move because your muscles instinctually know how to do it” By the end of the class, we moved lyrically as we listened to the music. It was beautiful. During this time of year, it is important for us to practice again and again – joy, hope, alleluias and hosannas. When we do this, we begin to do it naturally through spiritual memory. When times are hard, we still remember what it is to live and walk and dance and move in the world with hope and joy. The steps have already been given to us and we have repeated them again and again. Each time we dance with hope and joy, we are remembering what it means to live in hope. There is a commercial that says – HOPE HAS NOT BEEN CANCELLED. It is time for us to stretch out muscles and remember how God has planted hope and joy within our very being. Palm Sunday is a reminder of the ways that we dance in hope even in the shadow of turbulent times.

### HOLY WEEK

We look forward to Palm Sunday. Each year this is the Sunday when our children wave palm branches and sing some of their favorite songs. I have wondered why we usually begin Holy Week with a parade. Why do we remember such joy and celebration during a week that is heavy with: Jesus saying good bye to his disciples ; he is betrayed; denied ; our Messiah is in anguish; Jesus being mocked; he lives and dies in deep pain . I think the parade is a way of remembering hope and joy in the midst of great fear and sadness We hold onto this parade. It is flexing out our spiritual muscles that will carry us through the hardest of times. Those spiritual muscles remind us that in the midst of pain and suffering and facing the unknown, there is STILL HOPE and ultimately JOY. We make it through a Holy week because we remember hope.

On the first Palm Sunday, people from all over the world were coming to Jerusalem for Passover. They came to remember and celebrate. They were remembering that they had been in a tough, almost impossible spot before. As slaves in Egypt, they were led out to the Promised Land by Moses. The question at the Passover meal was always asked: “Why is this night different from any other night?” And children were taught from the time they were old enough to talk, all about the amazing journey to freedom. Every year they would repeat the story as they ate, played games and drank a bit too much. They were remembering joy even in the hardest of times. And this Passover memory held them as they lived in poverty and fear. I love how **Edward Markquett** described the day of the palm parade. Hundreds and thousands of Jewish people were in the holiest of cities. The streets were narrow. They were crammed together, shoulder to shoulder. As you got closer to the temple, there were people shouting, “Lambs for sale.” “Matzo here”, “No time to prepare a Passover meal? Come and enjoy one at this tent”. Some people in the crowd were just looking to meet their families and have a good old-fashioned family celebration. Others had had it and they were looking for a political revolution. History tells us that there had been many riots around that time. The Roman government was bracing for

another one. Jesus riding on his donkey was mocking Rome. He rode silently into the city. But hundreds of people were following him, shouting in one voice, "Hosanna, Hosanna- Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord." They together were shouting Psalm 118. It was a wonderful Psalm that repeats again and again "God's love endures forever." It is a song of victory that they sang with true joy. Throwing palm branches on the ground before him. It was a parade for a humble king who was challenging the power of Rome.

I remember right before Luke was born, Bill and I went to an Indigo Girl's Concert. The theater was packed with true fans. When The Indigo Girls played, we danced and sang with them. These were songs that had gotten us through the hardest of times. Even Luke in the womb danced a bit. At one point the Indigo Girls quit singing and the whole auditorium sang as one at the top of our lungs. Even though many of us didn't know each other, we felt at one. We remembered that those songs were touch stones of hope. We were stretching our souls filled with joy.

I imagine the crowd the day of the palm parade were remembering the psalms together, remembering the joy of freedom, remembering the power of God's love and that God did not leave them. I imagine that strangers standing, and yelling shoulder were flexing their spiritual muscles and dancing as they had done a hundred times. They were remembering Isaiah's promise: Those **who hope in the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall soar like eagles. They were remembering Psalm's song of victory- "God's love endures forever."**

#### SIGNPOST

Anne Lamott says, "**Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up trying to do the right then, the dawn will come- You will wait, watch and you don't give up.**" In the book, *Becoming Wise* by Krista Tippett, we are reminded that not only are we to be those who practice and remember hope, we are also the Signpost of Hope and Joy. We are to be those, who on the difficult path, point to the dawn where the sun rises. We are to point through the path of treacherous time to a place that will ultimately lead us to the Resurrected Christ. Never forget that!! We are to be those who always point to hope. So, on this Palm Sunday, pick us a palm branch and sing- Hosanna - Thank be to God for the one who has come to us. Hosanna.

Let us point – not toward apathy, not toward helplessness, not toward giving up. But let us point down a path of hope. That path that tells us if we wait long enough, the sun will rise.

And let us never forget how to dance into the dawn.