

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2024

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP *(from Psalms 118 & 136 and Mark 11)*

One: With crowds from ancient times we cry,
All: Hosanna! Save us!
One: O give thanks to the Lord, for God is good!
All: God's steadfast love endures forever.
One: Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
All: We bless you in the house of the Lord!
Unison: Let us worship the living God!

***OPENING HYMN** "We Sing Hosanna" *[Tune 197]*

**1. We sing our loud hosannas
to welcome Christ today.
God's steadfast love surrounds us
each step along the way.
The gates are flung wide open
as crowds their tribute raise:
"Hosanna in the highest!"
Our Savior's name we praise.**

**2. A lowly, peaceful donkey
bears Jesus through the throng
of joyous, shouting people
who sing their vict'ry song:
Rejoice in God's anointed
who claims us as God's own,
and offers us salvation
through Christ, the cornerstone.**

(continued...)

**3. May we who seek to follow
be emptied of false pride,
and take the form of servants,
with boundless love supplied.
Throughout our lives, rejoicing
in days that God provides,
we give our humble thanks, and
obey, as Jesus guides.**

Words: Lavon Bayler. Reprinted by permission of United Church Press from *Led by Love* by Lavon Bayler. Copyright 1996 by United Church Press.
Music: ELLACOMBE, *Gesangbuch der Herzogl. Württembergischen Katholischen Hofkapelle*, 1784; alt. *Public Domain*.

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**We sing before you, O God, the goodness of your ways.
We confess before you the error of ours.
We try to do it all in life,
 in our way, on our terms, by our schedule.
Then we get discouraged when we discover life is not at our beck and call.
We somehow come to think you have failed us
 when the truth is we have failed you.
Forgive us, O God,
 for trying to be the Master and failing to be the servant.
Help us to trust you and your good time.
Help us to cling to you and hope in your promises.
Help us to rest in your love and live it ourselves.
In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON *(from Isaiah 1)*

One: “Come now, let us reason together,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”
All: **“Though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.”**
One: Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we are cleansed of our sin and renewed as God’s people.
All: **We rejoice, for in Jesus Christ we are forgiven! Alleluia! Amen!**

THE PEACE

One: The peace of Christ be with you all.
All: **And also with you.**

(From your seat, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)

THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READING Mark 11:1-25

MARK 11:1-25 (New Revised Standard Version, updated edition)

¹ When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ² and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. ³ If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this: 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" ⁴ They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, ⁵ some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶ They told them what Jesus had said, and they allowed them to take it. ⁷ Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

"Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

¹¹ Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple, and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

¹² On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. ¹³ Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see whether perhaps he would find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ He said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it.

¹⁵ Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves, ¹⁶ and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. ¹⁷ He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written,

'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'?

But you have made it a den of robbers."

¹⁸ And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him, for they were afraid of him because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. ¹⁹ And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

²⁰ In the morning as they passed by, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. ²¹ Then Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered." ²² Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. ²³ Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and if you do not doubt in your heart but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you.

24 So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

25 “Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.”

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON “Cleaning House” by Pastor Bill Vincent

This is not your typical Spring cleaning.
Though it was Spring.

The people are excited. At least those in Jesus’ party. Mark’s telling of the story does not suggest the whole city came out to celebrate.

As Jesus rides up the hill into the city, those with him gather around and celebrate his coming and his presence, and what it means to them.

He has been speaking about the coming of the kingdom of God. Life is a mess for the people. Surely he is going to bring in the kingdom now, and clean house so God’s life and God’s way and God’s realm will prevail. Toss out the Romans. Maybe upend the people’s leaders, and turn things on their heads the right way, the just way, God’s way.

It even seems the religious leaders understand – that’s a first – or at least the religious leaders understand better than the crowd the true, real significance of Jesus’ coming and cleaning house.

And they don’t like it.
And, if we’re honest, neither do we.

Oh, there are parts of what Jesus is doing – cleaning house – that we like. Especially when it has to do with cleaning up someone else’s house. You know, “They really should do things my way; life would be so much better if they thought like I did and followed my example.”

And when Jesus’ cleaning house aligns – or appears to align – with our way of thinking, we’re all for it.

But that’s not always the case. Maybe not often the case.

And let’s think about why we clean house.

Because it’s where we live. To keep things in order. Keep things livable, whatever that means.

Well, Jesus knows what that means: an environment for true life; nurturing and supporting real life, where we live before God in holiness, in obedience, in faithfulness.

And when you put it that way, maybe we’re not doing that as well as we should. And Jesus has something to say about that.

We clean house because it's where we gather with family and friends for community.

And remember time and time again, Jesus has shown his commitment to nurturing and supporting, shaping and forming community, even a radically different community than we might expect or have imagined.

A community not divided up into the Gentile outer court and the Jewish inner court, into 'us' vs. 'them'.

But a community of all people before God and for one another.

We clean house in order to support good health: a healthy place to live.

Bartimaeus, in the story right before today's passage – Bartimaeus, blind, wants to see; is healed; and Jesus says to him, "*You faith has...* 'restored', 'healed', 'saved' ...*you.*" All equally viable translations. The healing and wholeness we need because of our brokenness: our broken relationships, our broken lives, our broken ways.

And Jesus comes to clean house – our house.

Like the temple, supposed to be producing fruit – good fruit of a "house of prayer" and faith – yet, like the fig tree (in an acted out parable), was not. So Jesus' cleansing the temple.

And cleaning house always – always – involves change and throwing out something – or some things.

Some things we might want to throw out, but Jesus might want to keep.

Some things we might want to keep, but Jesus might want to throw out.

Cleaning house:

-a life before God,

-a community before God,

-a healing, wholeness, restoration by God.

And it is rarely what we expect or imagine.

"Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!"

We've heard it in other words and stories before: indications that the people were wrong in the expectations of what Jesus' coming would mean for them and for their lives.

As Lamar Williamson reminds us,

[the] participants [in this procession] are wrong in their expectation that Jesus will immediately restore the fortunes of Jerusalem, and yet they are right in their hope that he is Messiah. He is no less King than their words suggest, but his kingdom is other and more than they dare to think. (Interpretation series, p.204)

And when that realization sets in, we tend to resist his coming, this "house cleaning," the change he seeks to bring to our lives.

Yes, we are attracted to this Jesus: there is an allure to his call, something compelling about him.

So there's this tension, like shouting and celebrating our expectations of him, while he rides in silence. This tug in two directions: my way vs. Jesus' way; my expectations for life vs. his vision.

When we find ourselves at odds with Jesus' way and his house cleaning efforts, when we find ourselves face-to-face with our own resistance to his work in us, perhaps prayer will help.

You see, it may be that the mountain we want (or need) to throw into the sea is not an external one, but an internal one. The mountain of our own resistance. The mountain of our own stubbornness. The mountain of our own ego clinging to our way and our control and our sway over life.

Yet if we feel that strange compulsion to follow – to heed his call, and his way – prayer can help when faced with such obstacles and resistance.

Prayer can help because it connects us – and changes us – it deepens our connection with the very one who comes to clean our house. And though prayer may not magically move mountains – certainly not in an instant, like we might wish – prayer does more and more align us with the creator and mover of mountains, and so align us with the divine will and the divine way...and the divine power.

The power to change hearts. The power to change lives. The power to move mountains, even the mountain of our own stubborn will.

And perhaps some of that prayer needs to include some serious help for forgiveness:

-that God would forgive us our resistance and obstinance,

-but also that God would help us forgive others.

“Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone....”

For as Eugene Boring keenly notes,

forgiveness is an indispensable aspect of community. If the Christian community is to be a “house of prayer for all nations,” it must be a forgiving community, for only forgiveness makes it possible for people to live together.
(The New Testament Library, p.325)

To live together in a “house of prayer for all people”:

-a house – a community – of faithfulness before God,

-a community of healing for all our brokenness,

-a community built on the road to a cross...and beyond.

***HYMN** “O for a Closer Walk with God” GtG 739

**1. O for a closer walk with God,
a calm and heavenly frame,
a light to shine upon the road
that leads me to the Lamb!**

(continued...)

2. **Return, O holy Dove, return,
sweet messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made thee mourn
and drove thee from my breast.**

3. **The dearest idol I have known,
whate'er that idol be,
help me to tear it from thy throne,
and worship only thee.**

4. **So shall my walk be close with God,
calm and serene my frame;
so purer light shall mark the road
that leads me to the Lamb.**

Words: William Cowper, 1769

Music: CAITHNESS, Scottish Psalter, 1635; harm. *The English Hymnal*, 1906, alt.
Public Domain.

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**The reconciling work of Jesus
was the supreme crisis in the life of humankind.
His cross and resurrection
become personal crisis and present hope
for women and men when the gospel is proclaimed and believed.
In this experience,
the Spirit brings God's forgiveness to all,
moves people to respond in faith, repentance, and obedience,
and initiates the new life in Christ.**

(from *The Confession of 1967—Inclusive Language Version* © 2002 Presbyterian Church
(U.S.A.), A Corporation on behalf of the Office of Theology and Worship All rights reserved.)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: Save us, O Lord,...
All: ...for your mercy is great.

LORD'S PRAYER (*Contemporary*)

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

(continued...)

~ 7 ~

**Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

OFFERING

Invitation

Reflection

**Unison Prayer of Dedication*

**God of grace, you amaze us with your grace and the depths of your love.
Accept these offerings as signs of our gratitude.
Use them, and us,
as a part of the inbreaking of your kingdom,
which comes and is still coming into our world today. Amen.**

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN** “Into My Heart” StF 2160

**1. Into my heart, into my heart,
come into my heart, Lord Jesus;
come in today, come in to stay;
come into my heart, Lord Jesus.**

**2. Out of my heart, out of my heart,
shine out of my heart, Lord Jesus;
shine out today, shine out alway;
shine out of my heart, Lord Jesus.**

Words and Music (INTO MY HEART) by Harry D. Clarke (1924, 1952). *Public Domain.*

***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

One: ...And let the gathered people of God say...
All: ...Amen.

POSTLUDE

The Call to Worship, Prayer for Illumination, Prayers of the People (adapted), and Prayer of Dedication are written by Teri McDowell Ott and Matthew A. Rich, and used by permission. © Presbyterian Outlook, 2023, 2024.