

Palm Sunday Service
Sunday, April 17, 2011
Amana Church Amana, a combined service, 10 a.m.

Elder: Emilie Hoppe

Scripture: Mark 11: 1- 11
Isaiah 49: 5 – 7

Testimony: Christian Metz, Amana, and April 1, 1858

Songs: “Es Kommt, Es kommt der Herre “no. 268 Psalter Spiel,
Verses 1, 3, 4 and 5
(please provide translated verses, p. 129 English Hymnal)

“Hosanna, Loud Hosanna” (3 verses) p. 189 English Hymnal

Palm Sunday 2011
Commentary – Emilie Hoppe

Read Mark 11: 1- 11

The triumphant entry into Jerusalem is one of those stories that captures your imagination. As kids we heard it again and again, well illustrated in those colorful Sunday School fliers they gave us. In the Middle Amana Sunday School, and I think here in Amana, they had these beautiful, old study posters –pairing a Bible verse with a large, 2 foot by 3 foot, full color illustration.

These posters began with Adam and Eve and marched through the Bible depicting the top 20, as it were, Biblical scenes and were bound together and hung on wooden stands and displayed at the front of the Sunday School room.

Palm Sunday was one of them... Jesus dressed in white and blue, sitting, perhaps a little uncomfortably, on a young mule colt, entering the capitol city with crowds of well wishers lining the street, strewing the street before him with palm branches, throwing their cloaks upon the road – shouting their acclamation, exclaiming the victory, using the Hebrew word – “Hosanna” –a word–meaning at once salvation and praise. So they exclaimed Hosanna in recognition, perhaps unwitting recognition, of Jesus’s heavenly kingship.

Yes, the triumphant entry into Jerusalem is one of those stories that captures your imagination.

We have to marvel at the loving wisdom of our God who not only gave us the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, but did so in a way that we can identify and cling to, and call up in our mind’s eye.

For this story is a true one. It is not fiction, it happened, it happened in Jerusalem over 2000 years ago and yet it has all the well crafted plot, relevant symbols and deep, multi-level meaning we human beings require to drive a message home. We humans like our stories big, colorful and dramatic, so here God creates a tableau, a memorable moment in time, a moment all people can recall, wonder over and remember. So many stories are lost in the muddle of time, so many details are washed away, so images grow dim and obscure, like faded photographs, but this moment, this image, this story, rings out and we can see it still, clear as day. We have only to close our eyes and see it – the welcoming crowd, the happy shouts, the sun washed street made colorful with waving green palms and brightly colored fabric, the tall, young man upon the colt, solemn and kingly, however humble his mount.

God is his wisdom set all these events in motion from the prophecies of Isaiah, to the star in the north sky, to the journey of the Magi, to the dove at St. John's pool to the hillside in Bethany where Jesus stood and told his disciples to go and find the young colt tied - yes, God set all these events in motion to bring Jesus to the gates of Jerusalem. And he did so for the sole purpose of saving humanity.

In Isaiah Chapter 25 we read: LORD, you are my God; I WILL EXALT YOU AND PRAISE YOUR NAME, FOR IN PERFECT FAITHFULNESS, YOU HAVE DONE WONDERFUL THINGS, THINGS PLANNED LONG AGO. HE WILL DESTROY THE SHROUD THAT ENFOLDS ALL PEOPLES, THE SHEET THAT COVERS ALL NATIONS; **8** HE WILL SWALLOW UP DEATH FOREVER. THE SOVEREIGN LORD WILL WIPE AWAY THE TEARS FROM ALL FACES; HE WILL REMOVE HIS PEOPLE'S DISGRACE FROM ALL THE EARTH. THE LORD HAS SPOKEN. IN THAT DAY THEY WILL SAY, "SURELY THIS IS OUR GOD; WE TRUSTED IN HIM, AND HE SAVED US. THIS IS THE LORD, WE TRUSTED IN HIM; LET US REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN HIS SALVATION."

Yes, indeed God in his perfect faithfulness has done wonderful things, things planned long ago. Things planned to destroy the shroud of death, things planned to wipe away all our tears.

And All these things, all these events arranged for the sole purpose of our salvation have at once the beauty of being true and real, and the significance of being holy and infused with deep, deep meaning for us.

The meaning of Palm Sunday works on so many levels - first the obvious meaning of the king arrived. The holy redeemer at the gate enters the city a victor, welcomed by his people. Then it works on a deeper level - for this king comes not wearing a crown, draped in gold robes and riding a dashing steed, no our king has no royal trappings. Our king comes riding a mere mule, cloaked in humble homespun; he has no army at his back. He is one person alone. One man.

But he is not what he appears to be; he is NOT one man alone, for he is the Son of God. He has no need of an army. With his father he is more than conqueror and He will conquer the greatest opponent of all - he will conquer death.

And while he stands at the gate of Jerusalem and he enters triumphant, triumphant in the knowledge that he will conquer the thing all humanity fears the most - the darkest thing in the universe - he knows that the week will end at the cross. There is no other way - and Jesus knows it. This fore knowledge of Jesus is something we should consider and ponder - for it is one thing to face a tough situation and not know the outcome, it is quite another to know how a thing will end and to still go on.

Jesus knew, just as he knew the colt would be standing tied near the gate, just as he knew that the owner would question the disciples sent to fetch him, just as he knew that Judas would betray him and Peter would lie. He knew all of that and still he

rode into Jerusalem.

So too, do we. We know how this week will end for Jesus. Like an ice-cold breeze that sends a shiver down our spine, standing in the sunlight of the brightest day in Jerusalem's history - we know.

Once long ago someone told me, I forget just who, that the best way to approach Easter is to imagine that you are there.

Imagine that you are among the crowd at Jerusalem's gate on Palm Sunday, welcoming Jesus, imagine that we are among those who follow Jesus that week, who go with him to the temple court, watch him confront the priests and answer their questions. Imagine we are with Jesus at the Last Supper -that we take the bread and drink the wine.

We are aided in this by the Biblical accounts - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John give us detailed images. So if our imaginations can run that far, if our imagination can insert ourselves in those images we can feel just how it felt to be not only a witness but a part of the action, to be at the Last Supper and finally to follow Jesus up that long path to the cross and then to walk with Mary in the early morning to stand at the empty tomb.

Yes, to experience this week fully, to feel it in our blood and marrow, and to allow it to take hold of us, we should and we must imagine ourselves there. For this story is true and for the truth to really grab hold of us, we have to imagine ourselves there.

Now here is where it gets a little more complicated, for while we would all like to imagine ourselves as true followers, true disciples of Christ, if we are honest, if we look deep into our hearts and honestly assess what lies there in the darkest corners, we have to acknowledge that we are, perhaps, not so loyal.

If we accurately examine our hearts and open them up to honest reflection, we have to acknowledge the truth - and the truth is - we each one of us, is just as likely to have been throwing stones as shouting hosanna.

For those people who did not trust Jesus, who thought him a liar, for those people who were confused, or angry or wanting Jesus to be a real king and grant them their hearts desire on earth with riches piled up and the Romans driven out and the glory of Jerusalem restored, for those people who distrusted, and did not want to give up their own power, and finally in bid for power, tried and found Jesus guilty - they are no different then you or I.

We are all capable of being misled or misleading.

We are all capable of failing to see and failing to do the right thing.

We are all capable of betraying our Lord.

And what is more, we have all done it over and over again.

We betray the Lord when we choose to hate, rather than to love our neighbors.

We betray him when we choose to ignore, rather than feed the hungry.

We betray the Lord when we look about us and distrust one another rather than embrace one another.

We betray the Lord when we fail to let him in to our lives. When we put money or power first.

If truth were told we are, none of us is so very different from Judas. As Peter discovered, to his bitter shame, we are all capable of betrayal.

But here's the good news - when we acknowledge that, when we see ourselves for what we are - we take the first big step to seeing what we can be and become through Jesus Christ. For though we are capable of doing wrong, we are also capable of doing right and with Jesus' help we will do right. As in the case of Peter who loved Jesus deeply and still betrayed him, Peter may have lied but he confessed, as forgiven and went on to establish the Christian church. He did all of that with Jesus' help. And Jesus knowing that Peter would betray, also knew that Peter would be the rock upon which his church would be built.

So take heart - don't be discouraged. We each one of us with Jesus' help has the potential to be the very best person we can be and this now is the deeper meaning of Palm Sunday - for Jesus stood not only at the gate of Jerusalem, he stands today at the gate of our hearts.

Yes, today and every day we have a choice - we have a choice to welcome him as a king or to reject him as an inconvenience. We can give him the glory or we can give him the boot. It's our choice. It's the very same choice that those folks of Jerusalem faced upon seeing Jesus. It's the same dilemma - For here is the one foretold, the one we've heard about and read it, and what are we going to do? Are we going embrace him or are we going to reject him?

And the thing is - we don't just make that decision once, we make it over and over again every day of our lives. Every day we choose to be a follower of Jesus. And that choice isn't just made manifest in whether or not we choose to go to church - that choice to accept and follow Jesus is made manifest in our attitude about life, in our

acceptance of our limitations and our approach to challenges. Our decision to follow Jesus has an impact upon every single thing we do –in every single relationship we have - in our work, in our home life, in our approach to life.

If we are followers of Jesus we follow every moment in all that we do.

We can be very obstinate, we can be arrogant – God knows that about us. God knows just how willful and frankly, stupid, we can be. And he loves us anyway. He loves us despite our weaknesses, or perhaps because of our weaknesses, God loves us. He doesn't love the sin in us, but he loves us.

So God sent his Son to us, to confront the darkness in our hearts and to confront the confusion in our souls and to offer us this clear choice, this clear opportunity to make good. And he does so over and over and over again.

For the great mystery revealed in Palm Sunday is not that it happened once which is wonderful in itself, – but that it happens again and again and again in your heart and in mine.

Jesus sent by God sees us, knows us, knows us to the core of our souls and still he comes to us, he enters our lives and works in us, all the while we make mistakes and fall back in confusion and fear, we alternately ignore or ridicule him, alternately we shout Hosanna or crucify him, but he is here and he does not give up.

Day by day, step by step from the moment of entry to the cross, he does not give up on us but continues, showing us the truth, enlightening our lives, giving us hope and finally, finally, rolling away the stone and leading us out into the light, until finally he says “come out,” and he sets us free.

Holy week is upon us, let us grasp this opportunity to walk with Jesus. Let us renew our souls and refresh our faith this week, day by day in the Scripture, in the Story, in the songs of praise remembering all the while that The triumph of Jesus on the streets of Jerusalem on that sunny morning is our own triumph. Just as the suffering and the humiliation of the cross is our own. Jesus stood for us then and he stands for us today. Thousands years have come and gone, we are there, we are here, time is a window not a wall and Jesus lives today as he lived then and he will live forever more.

So yes, let us shout Hosanna, for Salvation is HERE!

ISAIAH 49 5 -9

5 And now the LORD says— he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has been my strength.

6 he says: “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”

7 This is what the LORD says, the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel, to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers: “Kings will see you and stand up, princes will see and bow down, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”

8 This is what the LORD says:

“In the time of my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you; I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people, to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances, **9** to say to the captives, ‘Come out,’ and to those in darkness, ‘Be free!’

BENEDICTION::

GOD of Abraham, God of Isaac, we stand heads bowed, before you, children of faith, your children, redeemed by the blood of your Son whose sacrifice we acknowledge. We praise your name, as we ask your forgiveness for our sins and your forbearance of our ignorance, we sing songs to you and call you Holy, Great is our Lord God, Come the King Who is our Savior. We welcome him! AMEN.

PRAYER:

Would someone please affirm the Apostles Creed?

Our Father in Heaven,

We praise your Holy Name, as we ask your blessing upon us and upon our children. We ask for your blessing upon our worship service this morning and upon our prayers this week as we walk with Jesus upon the path you have set before him. Dear Father, please be with us here and help and guide us in our struggles as we strive to do what is right in your sight, loving others better than we love ourselves, help us to be true and loyal followers of your Son. Teach us Lord, Uplift and guide us, give us wisdom.

We pray today for our neighbors who struggle with illness and despair, we pray for our children that they be given insight and wisdom to grow in spirit and in strength, we pray for those who suffer in grief or loneliness. Please comfort them and give them peace. We ask that you relieve the oppressed and uphold the righteous. And this Eastertide we pray for peace, peace on earth and among men, that all might know you and recognize your power, and Father, we thank you for the gift of grace. We are not worthy, Father, but we are more than grateful. And so we pray together the prayer your Son taught... OUR FATHER Who ART IN HEAVEN>>>>

AMEN