



TETHERED  
TO GOD:  
I CHOOSE LOVE...

*April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020*

*Tethered to God – Palm Sunday*

Centre for  
Music, Liturgy & the Arts



## Preparing for worship

*You may wish to find a comfortable space and light a candle to remember the presence of Christ this day. If you are worshipping with others you are encouraged to share the various parts of worship and read them aloud.*

*This week, even as we worship in isolation, we remain connected in faith and in love as the Body of Christ, gathered together, despite not being physically present with one another.*

*In the Old Testament sometimes the word translated as “hope” is also the word “cord”. Hope connects us with God, in the same way that a cord connects one to another. With time and intention the cord or connection is strengthened. Interestingly, this form of hope is most common in the book of Job; perhaps, a reminder of the hope that Job has in God and the strength that this offers.*

*Perhaps now, our tethering to God and the interconnectedness with one another is more important than ever. We are deeply woven together and held by the love of God. It is this tethering that enables us to choose love, even in times of fear. It calls us to love our neighbour, to find ways to connect with one another, in times of social distancing. This day as we worship, may we remember that we connected to God, to one another and may we hear God’s call to love always.*

## Call to Worship

*A lament in the face of our struggles incorporating Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29*

At times of pain and struggling, in times like this, we cling to faith even as we bare our true feelings before God. This morning, in our Call to Worship, we shall recite the faithful words of the Psalmist, even while we are honest before God about our fears and anxieties.

**O give thanks to the LORD, for God is good; whose steadfast love endures forever!**

But where are you? In the midst of our anguish our souls cry out in pain.

**Let Israel say, "God’s steadfast love endures forever."**

Will you hold us, even in this hour?

**Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD.**

Your gates seem shut fast today and righteousness is but a dim memory.

**This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it.**

Show us the gate and give us the key for we are desperate and cannot see a way through.

**I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.**

We cling to the hope you have extended to us.

**The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.**

Mystery upon mystery confounds our understanding.

**This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.**

We can but wonder at the still small voice whispering in our despair.

**This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

We will summon our faith and cling to your Gospel.

**Save us, we beseech you, O LORD! O LORD, we beseech you, give us success!**

You alone can make a way through our dilemmas.

**Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD. We bless you from the house of the LORD.**

You, Jesus Christ, are in truth the source of life – the gift of grace.

**The LORD is God, who has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.**

We fix our gaze upon you. We centre our being in your longed-for presence.

**You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God,  
I will extol you.**

We will worship you and bear our souls before you.

**O give thanks to the LORD, for God is good, whose steadfast  
love endures forever.**

Bind us to your Spirit, that we might have life and stay tethered to you in  
love.

### *Hymn to Hope*

[Click here](#) to listen to The Secret Garden's song, Hymn to Hope. As you do, let  
the hope of God flow over you, knowing that you are not alone. You are held in  
the love of God and connected with people of faith through every time and  
every place.

### Prayer of Confession

O God, this day we remember the crowds who came singing and shouting  
praise. They came with palms and cloth, waving them joyously.

Forgive us when we do not welcome you into our midst.

O Christ, whose welcome only lasted a few hours, we confess that we too  
have taken our place amongst the doubters and the mockers.

Forgive us when we have not believed your Reign is present.

O Spirit, who hovers over life and is present even in death, we confess that  
we often fail to see your presence in one another and all creation.

Forgive us when we have lived in love.

### Words of Assurance

We are tethered to God – connected,  
even when all seems lost,  
even when we have turned away.

Our God is full of grace and mercy.

You are forgiven!

**Thanks be to God!**

## Scripture Reading: *Matthew 21:1-11*

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 fulfil 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.’

## Reflection on Scripture

The bible is a complex world with complex people and complex situations. Some of the stories are, what Barbara Brown Taylor, Episcopal Priest, scholar and brilliant writer, calls, “Texts of Terror”. She says these texts are “terrible to me because they expose my vulnerability”. This is one such story. It is terror-filled because we know all too well that these voices are our voices, that this crowd that calls out “hosanna” is the same crowd that calls out “crucify him” and that we too could just as easily find ourselves here. We can sense the emotion of the frenzied crowd on Palm Sunday that is just teetering on the edge of being out of control. We know just how quickly popular opinion can turn and we might find ourselves on the flip side – perhaps unaware that we are now the voice from the underbelly. We know what it is to seek out a Messiah – someone who is going to bring change and then disillusioned, disappointed and in angry resentment we find ourselves badmouthing the very person in whom we placed our hopes and dreams. This

scene is all too familiar and it makes us uneasy to say the least. A new president, a new prime minister, a new boss, a new principal, a new minister, a new leader. Here we find ourselves vulnerable and exposed.

- What is it this day that you might yell out of the crowd? Perhaps at Jesus, perhaps at some other “hoped for” Messiah? What word of hope, praise, question, disappointment, heckle or insult might form on your lips?

This journey of Holy Week is a familiar one – not only to us but to Christians throughout the centuries – and also to God. Jesus walked on through this crowd towards what he knew was going to be painful, terrifying, horrifying, torturous. And yet he walked on. God has been here before. God has, through many, many centuries, been here – time and time again. With the Israelites in Egypt, with the victims of the crusades, with the Indigenous in many lands, with the victimized of the Holocaust, with the refugees risking lives in dangerous waters, with sufferers in pandemics – this is a journey that is familiar to God – and once again we find God here. In all of the uncertainty, in all of the uneasiness, in the underbelly of this final festival, in all of the events of the week to come – God is here. God is always here.

*Abide with Me*

[Click here](#) to listen Audrey Assad’s version of Abide with Me. Be assured of God’s presence this day.

Offering

*All that we are, and all that we have is first a gift from God. Our offering to God is from the fullness of all we have received. You may wish to consider how you can use the gifts God has given to you at this time: gifts of kindness and compassion, gifts of skills and knowledge, gifts of money and time, gifts of love and connection. Let us give of our offering with grateful hearts.*

Prayers of the People

*You are invited to listen to “The Prayer” sung by Andrea Bocelli and Katharine McPhee. [Click here](#) to listen. As you listen to this prayer, add your prayers for places in the*

*world, our communities, the church, and for people you love, who need to know the presence of God this day. At the end of the song, pray the Lord's prayer below.*

And now with the confidence of the children of God we join the world in the prayer that unites us in Christ:

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be Your name,  
your Kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in Heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin  
against us.

Save us in the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power  
and the glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen.

## Responding to God

*You are invited to send a message of love or peace to someone you know, to let them know you are thinking of them and praying for them today. You might want to do this a phone call or text message.*

## Blessing

May you know the presence of God encircling you this day.

May you know the peace of God deep within your soul.

May you know the love of God upholding you always.

Amen.

