



# Palm Sunday

First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ  
Anoka, Minnesota

April 2, 2023 ♦ 8:30am & 10:30am



***We are an Open and Affirming Church.***  
***No matter who you are or***  
***where you are in your life's journey,***  
***you are welcome here.***



This bulletin is designed to assist you as you watch our livestreamed worship service, whether you follow along live or view it at a later time. The stream can be found on our YouTube channel at this location:  
<https://www.youtube.com/@AnokaUCC>

## Welcome & Announcements

*If you would like to join our mailing list, email [office@uccanoka.org](mailto:office@uccanoka.org) and ask to be added.*

## Prelude

Koki Sato

## The Church Bell Rings

### \* Opening Hymn

“Hosanna, Loud Hosanna” #213

**“Hosanna, loud hosanna,” the little children sang;  
through pillared court and temple the lovely anthem rang.  
To Jesus, who had blessed them close folded to his breast,  
the children sang their praises, the simplest and the best.**

**From Olivet they followed amid a cheering crowd,  
the victor palm branch waving and chanting clear and loud.  
The one whom angels worship rode on in lowly state,  
and glad to see the children, slowed down the donkey's gate.**

**“Hosanna in the highest!” That ancient song is ours.  
We hail our great Redeemer and sing with all our powers:  
“Hosanna, Christ, we praise you with heart and life and voice,  
Hosanna! In your presence forever we'll rejoice!”**

### \* Opening Psalm of Praise (portions of Psalm 118)

One: O give thanks to the LORD, for she is good; her steadfast love endures forever!

**Many: Her steadfast love endures forever!**

One: It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to put confidence in mortals.

**Many: It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.**

One: The LORD is my strength and my might;

**Many: the LORD has become my salvation.**

One: The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone;

**Many: this is the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes!**

One: This is the day that the LORD has made;

**Many: Let us rejoice and be glad in it!**

One: Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD;

**Many: we bless you from God's house!**

One: Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.

**Many: You are my God, and I will give thanks to you.**

One: O give thanks to the LORD, for God is good;

**Many: God's steadfast love endures forever!**

A Time for Children (10:30)

Prayer of Preparation (sung, unison)

"Holy, Holy, Holy"

An Argentine folk song.



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly. My heart, my heart a - dores you! My  
¡San - to, san - to, san - to, mi co - ra - zón te a - do - ra! Mi



heart knows how to say to you: You are ho - ly, Lord!  
co - ra - zón te sa - be de - cir: ¡San - to e - res, Dios!

Palm Sunday in Story and Song

"Hosanna"

Webber and Rice

from *Jesus Christ Superstar*;

Anoka UCC Chancel Choir; Don Shier, Director

Hosanna Heysanna Sanna Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Sanna Ho Sanna  
Hey J C, J C won't you smile at me? Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Superstar!

Luke 19:29-48

When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, <sup>30</sup> 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. <sup>31</sup> If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'"

*Hosanna Heysanna Sanna Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Sanna Ho Sanna  
Hey J C, J C YOU'RE ALRIGHT BY ME. Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Superstar!*

<sup>32</sup> So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. <sup>33</sup> As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" <sup>34</sup> They said, "The Lord needs it." <sup>35</sup> Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup> As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road.

*Hosanna Heysanna Sanna Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Sanna Ho Sanna  
Hey J C, J C won't you fight for me? Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Superstar!*

<sup>37</sup> 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, <sup>38</sup> saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!"

*Hosanna Heysanna Sanna Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Sanna Ho Sanna  
Hey J C, J C won't you smile at me? Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Superstar!*

<sup>39</sup> Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop! Get these crowds to quiet down! For you are threatening the delicate balance we have with the Governor and the Empire, the agreement we have with them that allows us to practice our faith without interference from the soldiers and officials!"

*Hosanna Heysanna Sanna Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Sanna Ho Sanna  
Hey J C, J C YOU'RE ALRIGHT BY ME. Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Superstar!*

<sup>40</sup> Jesus answered, "I could no more silence these joyous people than I could stop the earth from turning. And if I did, all the trees of the forest would sing for joy. Even the stones themselves would shout aloud in wonder at the coming of the Lord!"

*Hosanna Heysanna Sanna Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Sanna Ho Sanna  
Hey J C, J C won't you fight for me? Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Superstar!*

<sup>41</sup> As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, <sup>42</sup> saying, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. <sup>43</sup> Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. <sup>44</sup> They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God."

*Hosanna Heysanna Sanna Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Sanna Ho Sanna  
Hey J C, J C won't you smile at me? Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Superstar!*

<sup>45</sup> Then he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling things there; <sup>46</sup> and he said, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer'; but you have made it a den of robbers."

*Hosanna Heysanna Sanna Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Sanna Ho Sanna  
Hey J C, J C YOU'RE ALRIGHT BY ME. Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Superstar!*

<sup>47</sup> Every day he was teaching in the temple. The chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people kept looking for a way to kill him; <sup>48</sup> but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were spellbound by what they heard.

*Hosanna Heysanna Sanna Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Sanna Ho Sanna  
Hey J C, J C won't you fight for me? Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Superstar!*

Sermon

Rev. Chris McArdle

Hymn

“My Song Is Love Unknown” #222 (vv 1, 3-5)

*Singing this from the hymnal is strongly recommended!*

**My song is love unknown, my Savior's love to me,  
love to the loveless shown, that they might lovely be.  
O whom am I, that for my sake my God should take frail flesh and die?  
My God should take frail flesh and die?**

**Sometimes they threw down palms and sweetest praises sang.  
Hosannas and glad psalms through streets and markets rang.  
Then “Crucify!” is all their breath, for blood and death they thirst and cry;  
for blood and death they thirst and cry.**

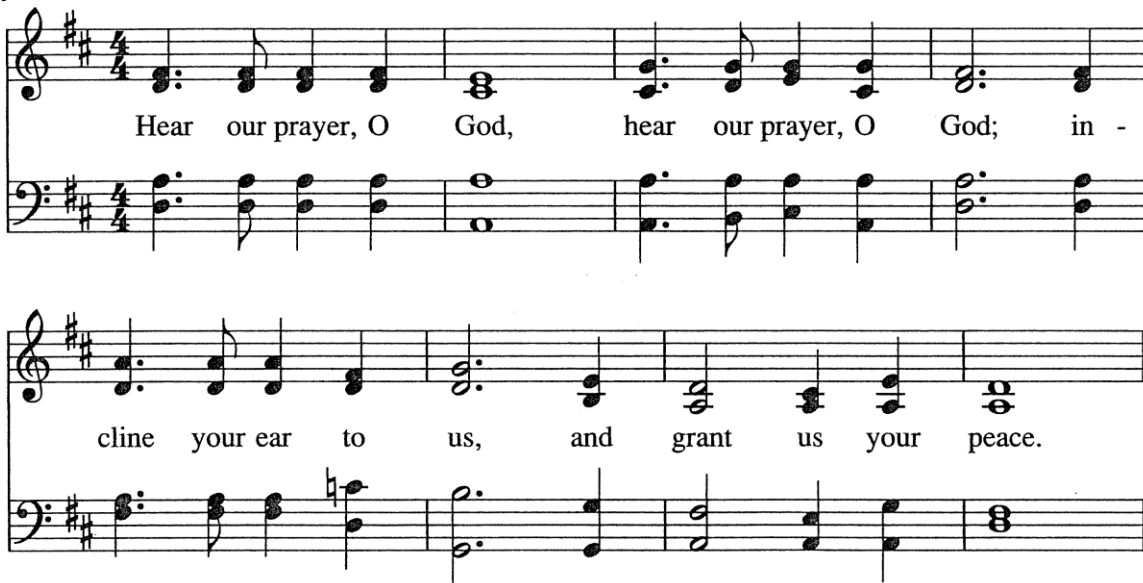
**What has my Sovereign done? What makes this rage and spite?  
Christ gave new strength to run, restored the gift of sight.  
Sweet injuries! Yet they at these themselves displease, and 'gainst Christ rise;  
themselves displease, and 'gainst Christ rise.**

**I sing my plain belief, one song my heart outpours:  
never was pain nor grief, never was love like yours.  
This is my Friend, in whose sweet praise I all my days could gladly spend,  
I all my days could gladly spend.**

## Prayers of the People

If you wish to share a prayer with the congregation (joy, concern, hope, worry, or anything at all), raise your hand and a Deacon will bring you a microphone. Offer your prayer and finish by saying, "God in your love" to which we will all respond, "**Hear our prayer.**"

## Sung Prayer



Hear our prayer, O God, hear our prayer, O God; in -  
cline your ear to us, and grant us your peace.

## Prayer of Our Savior (unison)

The Prayer has many versions; pray whichever you desire (debts, sins, trespasses, etc.). We affirm that God has many names, so use one of the suggested or another of your choosing.

**Our Father/Mother/Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

## Offering

Text-to-Give: [844-334-1477](tel:844-334-1477)

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You can support the church further through the RaiseRight program: [www.raiseright.com](http://www.raiseright.com). Our unique church ID is gWKLGX8TRZCN.

## Offertory

Koki Sato

## \* Doxology

NUN DANKET

"Now Thank We All Our God" #419 v. 3

**All praise and thanks to God our Maker now be given,  
to Christ, and Spirit, too, our help in highest heaven.**

**The one, eternal God, whom earth and heaven adore,  
for thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore!**

\* Benediction

\* Congregational Blessing      “God Be With You” (#809)      Dorsey/Hutchins

**God be with you. God be with you. God be with you ‘til we meet again.  
O God be with you. God be with you. God be with you ‘til we meet again.**

Postlude

Koki Sato

#### Acknowledgements

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#### Sermon Text

A lot of folks in a lot of churches don’t go to church on Maundy Thursday or Good Friday, and before I say anything else please understand that I’m not dragging anyone here for doing Holy Week the same way. A lot of life happens on Thursday and Friday nights that doesn’t always leave room to go to church, and I understand that. Before I was a seminarian I didn’t do it either. Now, that being said...

... a lot of folks in a lot of churches don’t go to church on Maundy Thursday or Good Friday. Because of that, in some churches, Palm Sunday is also framed as “Passion Sunday” so that folks will experience the rest of the story. I agree that it’s important to get that part of it and not just go from “Hosanna!” to “Hallelujah!” Thursday and especially Friday remind us that the story of Jesus’s final week wasn’t just a party. It’s not all cause for celebration. And while that’s uncomfortable, I think God calls us to sit in that discomfort. To not forget it. To let it continue to shape us into people who understand that our love needs to be a fierce love that stands in holy solidarity with the widow and orphan, the oppressed and persecuted, and everyone else who the world says is aberrant and abominable.

There’s a lot I can and will say about that, but what is so marvelous is that Don picked a song for Palm Sunday that captures all of the emotional beats of Holy Week in *a single refrain*. In fact, let’s sing it together—we’ll do the one that goes “You’re alright by me” at the top of page 4 in the bulletin.

***Hosanna Heysanna Sanna Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Sanna Ho Sanna  
Hey J C, J C YOU’RE ALRIGHT BY ME. Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Superstar!***

Do you hear it? That first half of the refrain is all Palm Sunday. It’s “Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the LORD!” It’s children parading into sanctuaries with palm branches waving. In some particularly brave churches it’s a donkey walking down the center aisle while the church sexton prays it doesn’t decide to go to the bathroom. It’s joy and rapture and here, it’s Eggstravaganza!

The shift from major to minor in the melody immediately reminds us of Thursday and Friday, but take note—that tonal shift actually happens immediately in the story. In Luke, the Pharisees immediately demand an end to the festivities. Also in Luke, Jesus approaches the city and weeps as he foreshadows the destruction of Jerusalem itself, something that happened in the year 70 CE. Finally, he enters the



Temple grounds and drives out the sellers and moneychangers, a protest against an unjust economic system that Pilate probably immediately characterized as terrorism. All of that gets covered in that shift from major to minor.

Unfortunately, there's something else conveyed in that switch from major to minor, and the songwriters run with it. In the show, right after the first refrain, the Jewish high priest Caiaphas sings these lyrics: "Tell this rabble to be quiet; we anticipate a riot! This common crowd is much too loud! Tell the mob who sing your song that they are fools and they are wrong; they are a curse; they should disperse." The scene is Biblical; we've already heard it today in Luke's version of the story, though it's not explicitly there in Matthew, Mark, or John. But it's in the musical, and the traditional stagings of it have Caiaphas singing in this gravelly, demonic-sounding tone ((sing an example)), and the major productions always dress the High Priest and the other Jewish leaders like they were Darth Vader's poker buddies.

I bring all of this up not because of any issues I may have with *Jesus Christ Superstar* as a musical work, but because this scene in the show comes right out of a Passion play, not Passion Sunday. I saw a Passion play once in the Black Hills in 1984, though all I remember about it is the rain that sent most of the crowd running to shove together under the weather canopy under which we already had seats. I learned about them later, though, including the one that still runs in Oberammergau, Germany. Passion plays were a major part of how the Church educated the illiterate about the Passion story, and the common critique made against them by our Jewish neighbors is that they play up the Jews as these bloodthirsty folks who wanted Jesus dead. Passion plays fed anti-semitism for centuries and continue to do so. And though one might be inclined to think that Christian antisemitism isn't that pronounced anymore, too many synagogues have been shot up to really believe that. And while the 2018 *Jesus Christ Superstar* live event with John Legend as Jesus had a more diverse and even-handed casting, it still made many of these same moves, especially in the costuming. Various Jewish groups spoke out about it then just as they did in 1970 for the musical's premiere and in 1973 at the film's premiere.

That's more than a shame; that's a moral failure, and I think it demonstrates what I'm totally going to call lazy scholarship and lazy interpretation. I've often preached from up here that the only institution to blame for the death of Jesus is the Roman Empire. But even as I say that, I know the text suggests the Jewish leaders weren't happy. As faithful Christians who love our Jewish friends and relatives, it's up to us to read it without the Gospel writers' prejudices.

To that end: why might those priests be so upset at what Jesus is doing? It turns out the answer is awfully simple. It's all about Rome! The Romans had an itchy trigger finger when it came to executing anyone they thought was guilty of seditious behavior, and while the Jews enjoyed a certain kind of second-class status in Rome that allowed them to practice their faith with minimal interference, they knew that they had to operate very carefully in order to avoid Imperial entanglements. They couldn't afford to look like they were advocating for the overthrow of Caesar. So when this popular, rural Jewish celebrity comes rolling into town in front of a large crowd who are hailing him as a king, of course the Jewish leaders are freaking out! It's not so much "tell this rabble to be quiet" so much as it is, "Shhhh! You're going to get us all killed!!!"

That's the underlying tension of Palm Sunday that we miss if we don't keep reading after the palms. What Jesus was doing that day was dangerous. It's entirely possible he was inviting a response just like folks today who go protest injustice in order to be arrested. If nothing else, the instructions Jesus gives to the disciples makes it appear that he had prearranged the donkey and some of the other events of the day. This wasn't just some spontaneous expression of incredulous joy—and it wasn't Easter, either. That's still a week away.

But that's also maybe my favorite part. Let's sing it again. Same as before:

***Hosanna Heysanna Sanna Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Sanna Ho Sanna  
Hey J C, J C YOU'RE ALRIGHT BY ME. Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Superstar!***



That little flip right at the end back into major? That's the foreshadowing of Easter! That's our tiny little promise that a brand new day is coming, that all the people rejoicing at Jesus's entry to Jerusalem will have something even more remarkable to rejoice about in about seven days when Mary Magdalene starts spreading the news. The "Hosannas" will turn into "Hallelujahs"!

In the end, that Good News is the whole point. On that day that capped a horrible week, a week that saw the death of hope and the erosion of joy, God responded with the ultimate assurance:

Though the road might be filled with pain, this will end in bliss.

Though the river might be filled with rocks both hidden and visible that seek to knock holes in our boats and cause us to sink, the water will still carry us to a sea of justice and peace.

And though it will ever try, the Empire is not greater than God. Not greater than compassion. Not greater than empathy and tenderness and care and love. On this Passion Sunday, we still rejoice, because we know what's coming.

***Sanna ho-sanna hey Superstar!***

Amen.

## HOLY WEEK SERVICES

- **Maundy Thursday @ 6:30pm** – A simple service with Communion. We will share the sacrament around a dinner table at the front of the Sanctuary and reflect deeply on the Last Supper and how we have and haven't embraced it. Worship is built around "By My Side" from *Godspell*, sung by Kari Johnson and Laurie Elvig.
- **Good Friday @ 7:30pm** – as a bookend to Christmas Eve, this service features both Scripture lessons and Holy Week "carols," all built around the song "On the Willows" from *Godspell* as sung by Laurie Elvig and Kari Johnson.
- **Easter Sunday @ 8:30am and 10:30am** – For those who had been mourning since Friday, Easter is a BRAND NEW DAY! We will worship and celebrate the Resurrection with the anthem "Brand New Day" from *The Wiz* as we join Mary and her friends in awe and wonder. Hallelujah!

♦ **First Congregational Church UCC, Anoka, MN** ♦

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Minister of Visitation – Pastor Kelsey Renk

Director of Music Ministries – Don Shier

Keyboardist – Koki Sato

Moderator – Terja Larsen

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