

# DYING HIS DEATH LIVING HIS LIFE

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SERVICE FOR PALM SUNDAY

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FRED NIEDNER

# **DYING** HIS DEATH **LIVING** HIS LIFE

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### **BLESSED IS HE**

### **NEWSLETTER NOTICE**

Join us for the Palm Sunday service, “Blessed Is He.” We will shout with the crowds to our Lord, “Blessed is he.” Blessed by God, Jesus journeys toward death to bring us new life.

### **BULLETIN NOTICE**

In this service for Palm Sunday, we shout with the crowds to our Lord, “Blessed is he.” Blessed by God, Jesus journeys toward death to bring us new life.

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### COMPLETE SCRIPT FOR WORSHIP LEADERS

- If desired, an **Environmental Projection** is shown on a screen or on the walls of your worship space to set the tone for the service before the service begins or throughout the service at various points:

[shutterstock.com/image-photo/easter-wooden-cross-on-black-background-1655022487](https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/easter-wooden-cross-on-black-background-1655022487)

- This **Theme Verse** is read aloud by the pastor at the start of the service or is read silently by the congregation before the service begins:

*Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he,  
humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.  
Zechariah 9:9*

- The **Opening Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Valet Will Ich Dir Geben 76 76 D, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

All glory, laud and honor to you, Redeemer, King,  
To whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.

You are the King of Israel and David's royal Son,  
Now in the Lord's name coming, our King and Blessed One.

All glory, laud and honor to you, Redeemer, King,  
To whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.

The company of angels is praising you on high,  
And we with all creation in chorus make reply.

All glory, laud and honor to you, Redeemer, King,  
To whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.

The multitude of pilgrims with palms before you went;  
Our praise and prayer and anthems before you we present.

All glory, laud and honor to you, Redeemer, King,  
To whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.

To you before your passion they sang their hymns of praise;  
To you, now high exalted, our melody we raise.

All glory, laud and honor to you, Redeemer, King,  
To whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.

As you received their praises, accept the prayers we bring,  
O Source of ev'ry blessing, our good and gracious King.

All glory, laud and honor to you, Redeemer, King,  
To whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.

- The **Invocation and Call to Worship** are spoken responsively by the pastor and the congregation:

**P** In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

**P** Today we follow Jesus, our humble King, into Jerusalem as he begins his final steps to the cross. As the Savior entered the city, a crowd followed him, waving palm branches and calling out, "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

**C** Hosanna in the highest!

- P** The prophet Zechariah foretold the way Jesus would enter Jerusalem: “Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9).

**C Hosanna in the highest!**

- P** The word *hosanna* means, “Save us!” The people longed for a king who would conquer their enemies and set up a glorious earthly kingdom.

**C Save us now, Lord!**

- P** The humble King did not come to set up an earthly kingdom. He came to save us by offering himself as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. He came to bring us salvation and an eternal kingdom.

**C Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!**

- The **Confession and Absolution** are spoken responsively by the pastor and the congregation:

- P** Let us confess our sins to God and ask his forgiveness for the sake of Jesus, our King and Savior.

**C Almighty God, we confess that we are often like the people of Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday. We want a different kind of king. We want a king who will bring us earthly wealth or power or popularity. We seek things that will satisfy our own selfish desires. We do not follow in the humble steps of Jesus, our King. We do not seek to serve others in his name. Have mercy on us, and forgive our sins.**

- P** God has had mercy on us. He sent his Son to be our King and Savior. Jesus entered Jerusalem and took up his path to the cross. On the cross, he bore the burden of our sins in his own body so that we would be forgiven. I announce to you that your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Our King has saved us and set us free!

**C Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!**

- The **Prayer of the Day** is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

- P** Jesus, our King and Savior, on Palm Sunday, the crowds called to you, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” They praised you, blessing your holy name. Now, through faith in your name, we are blessed with forgiveness for our sins and the gift of eternal life. We are citizens of your kingdom, now and forever. Help us to follow in your footsteps, dear King, so that each of us will be a blessing to others, sharing with them the gifts that you have given to us. Lead us in the power of the Holy Spirit to be bold witnesses for you, so that others will

come to know and worship you as their King and Lord. Blessed are you, Jesus, who came to us to be our Savior! Amen.

- The **Children's Sermon** is delivered by the pastor or other worship leader:

*Needed: palm branches (if possible, enough for each child)*

- Ⓟ Today is the beginning of the week we call Holy Week. On Friday, we will remember how Jesus died on the cross for us. Next Sunday, on Easter, we will celebrate Jesus' resurrection. Today is called Palm Sunday. Why do we give this day that name? *(Let children answer.)* When Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem on a Sunday, the people waved palm branches like flags. It was like a parade and the crowd shouted, "Hosanna!" In their language, that word means "Save us!" The people wanted Jesus to be a king. They hoped that Jesus would fight against the enemy Roman armies that lived in their country. They wanted Jesus to save them from the Romans.

Jesus was a different kind of king. He did not come to drive away earthly enemies like the Roman soldiers. He came to save us from sin, death and the devil. What did Jesus do to save us? *(Let children answer.)* Jesus died on the cross for us. He was punished for our sins. Then on the first Easter morning, Jesus came alive again. He won the victory over death. Jesus is our King, the King who saved us. Let's use the words from the Palm Sunday parade to praise Jesus. Repeat the words after me: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna!" *(Have children repeat the praise.)* Let's have everyone in church today join us in saying those words: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna!"

Let's pray: Jesus, you died on the cross to save us. You are our King and our Savior! Amen.

- The **Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune O Durchbrecher 87 87 D, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

Hail, thou once despis-ed Jesus! Hail, thou Galilean King!  
Thou didst suffer to release us; Thou didst free salvation bring.  
Hail, thou universal Savior, Bearer of our sin and shame!  
By thy merit we find favor: life is given through thy name.

Paschal Lamb, by God appointed, all our sins on thee were laid;

By almighty love anointed, thou hast full atonement made.  
All thy people are forgiven through the virtue of thy blood;  
Opened is the gate of heaven. Reconciled are we with God.

- The **Old Testament Reading**, Psalm 118:14-23, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous: “The right hand of the LORD does valiantly, the right hand of the LORD exalts, the right hand of the LORD does valiantly!” I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the LORD. The LORD has disciplined me severely, but he has not given me over to death. Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

- The **New Testament Reading**, Revelation 5:11-13, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

- The **Gospel Reading**, Matthew 21:1-11, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village in front 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, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’” The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd



spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”

- The **Sermon Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Ellacombe 76 76 D, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

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 mid an exultant crowd,  
The victor palm branch waving and chanting clear and loud.  
The Lord of earth and heaven rode on in lowly state  
Nor scorned that little children should on his bidding wait.

- The **Sermon** is delivered by the pastor:

¶ “In the spring,” Alfred, Lord Tennyson famously wrote, “a young man’s fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.” True enough, as the literature and popular culture of every age attest, but it only tells half the story at best. One of the most celebrated springtime love stories in the Bible, or anywhere else, corroborates Tennyson’s assessment but also tells how springtime triggers another powerful urge in human hearts, especially in men’s hearts, it seems. In 2 Samuel 11, we hear of King David’s affair with Bathsheba, his neighbor’s wife. The story begins with this note: “In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle...” (2 Samuel 11:1) and goes on to recount how that spring, King David did not go off as usual with the rest of the guys to do some pillaging and head-busting. We all know the consequences.

Even without its tawdry story of adultery, deep tragedy haunts this chapter of Scripture, specifically, in the assumption that this is the way of kings and princes. Come spring, as soon as the weather permits, they go out seeking battle and a chance to ravage. We could, and often do, tell the history of our species as little more than the record of this deadly game which the powerful play, in which young men and women slaughter each other in the name of and for the causes of their kings, emperors, dictators, presidents or their own selfish ends. Each generation contributes to the machinery and language of warfare. Ours is no exception. We and all those with whom we have battled in our generation have added a vast array of technology and vocabulary to the long tale of waging war, what with IEDs and smart bombs, stealth fighters, cruise missiles and drones.



In Jesus' day, springtime in Jerusalem meant the coming of Passover, the festival that celebrated God's liberation of Israelites from bondage in Egypt by smiting the oppressors and destroying Pharaoh's army. Tens of thousands of Jewish pilgrims would come to town, singing psalms of deliverance and prepared to celebrate and rehearse that story in hopes that God would strike again, this time against Rome and its oppression. Sometimes violence erupted, so every year at Passover, the governor came and marched his soldiers, horse, and chariots into Jerusalem to make a show of force.

The Passover story we celebrate today recalls how another young man rode into town with a procession of sorts on that day long ago. He, too, came to bring peace, although his tactics were quite different, and his technology was quaint even for his day. Swords and chariots couldn't make or keep the kind of peace he meant to bring. His troops carried tree branches and sang songs of hope, just as we're doing today, as one more time, we welcome heaven's King. He arrives now as he did then, to the sound of eager expectation, but still he rides that same, old donkey. His technology hasn't changed. His slow, humble mount is as effective at cutting off a chariot or a war horse as it would be in a dogfight against a Phantom jet. Apparently, no matter the age, this is the only way this son of David enters this world's battles.

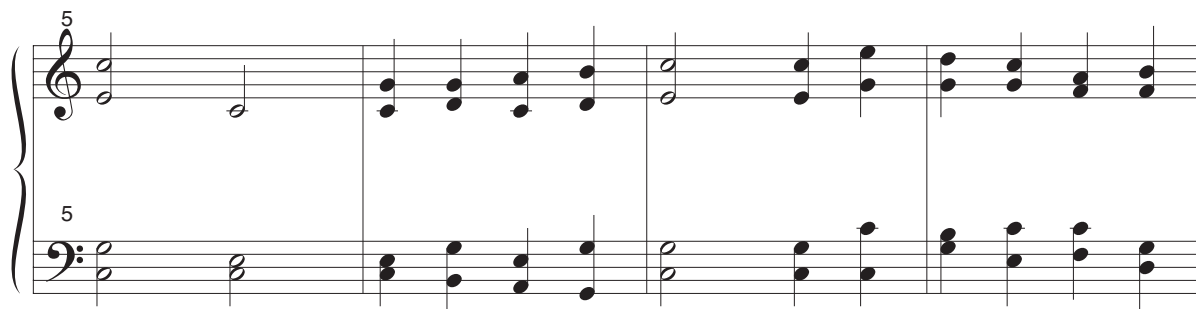
And as we hear again each year, this time in Matthew's story of Jesus' final days, this gentle, donkey-riding King faces the hostile mobs and the empire's governor and soldiers with nothing but his integrity, the certain memory of his baptism, and the word of truth that the voice from the heavens had declared to him about who he was. "You are my beloved Son," said the voice (Mark 1:11). And to that identity, and only that identity, he clings.

Many of us have seen 40, 50, even 70 or 80 Palm Sundays come and go. We have seen him arrive so many times before, and we know how his journey transpires. He always ends up condemned, beaten and put to death in the same, cruel, utterly humiliating way. We are poised to commemorate those things in these next days, as we sit with him at a last supper, and then stand, watching and praying, as he faces trial, abandonment and death. This King comes into his glory on a bloodied cross-shaped wooden throne.

Every year, we follow along, walking beside and behind the Donkey-Rider, knowing full well, in the pits of our stomachs, what we must witness when we get to Jerusalem. And yet we do it each time because we know that he alone holds our only chance for genuine peace in this world or in any other. We must stick close to him. Any other way besides his way of facing hatred, threats, violence, force and killing only conceals within it the seeds of the next showdown, the next estrangement, the next war. Violence only begets violence, and vengeance can only beget the next round of retaliation.

Thus, we follow closely as this humble King goes at his slow, awkward pace into places in this world where, just as he warned us, we, too, stand before kings, governors and powerful rulers of every kind for his sake, armed only with our integrity, which, just like his, is grounded in

Tune.....Valet Will Ich Dir Geben 76 76 D



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### **BLESSED IS HE**

### **CONTEMPORARY MUSIC SONG SUGGESTIONS**

- The following song suggestions can be used for a more contemporary worship service in place of the more traditional hymns included in this kit. Rights to use these songs in the service must be purchased by your parish through CCLI or other copyright licensing agencies.

“My Savior, My God” by Aaron Shust and Dorothy Greenwell

“Dying to Live” by Steven Curtis Chapman

“Blessed Be Your Name” by Beth Redman and Matt Redman

“Is He Worthy” by Andrew Peterson and Ben Shive

“Hosanna (Praise Is Rising)” by Brenton Brown and Paul Baloche

“Shout Hosanna” by Brett Younker, Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash and Kristian Stanfill