

**PALM/PASSION SUNDAY**  
**MARCH 24, 2024**



**ST. JOHN**  
**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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*Ushers -*

(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431

\*Please stand if comfortably able  
and respond with words in bold print

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP:** (*inspired by Isaiah 50:4-9a*)

One: Come. Come seeking words.

**All: Come to let your tongue give praise.**

One: Come. Come to find your voice.

**All: Come to hear the response.**

One: Come. Come to open your ears.

**All: Come to listen.**

One: Come. Come to be healed by the silence.

**All: Come to stand together.**

One: Come. Come to approach what words cannot describe.

**All: Come to find God.**

**\*RESPONSIVE PRAYER OF INVOCATION:**

Come. Come O Holy One.

Come through the streets.

Come into the house.

Come to find a space beside us at the table.

Come to challenge our answers about

**Why tragedy comes**

**Why poverty increases**

**Why we are afraid.**

Come O Holy One. Speak to us in the silence

**With wisdom greater than ours**

**With love deeper than ours**

**With change wider than ours.**

Come O Holy One. Fill in these stories with your wisdom  
with your love with your change  
so that we might rely on your answers.

Here and now. Amen.

**\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION:** *(inspired by Psalm 31:9-16)*

O Holy One, we are too distressed to notice that you join us in the parade. We are too deeply grieved to be aware that you sit beside us at the table. We are too busy sighing. We are too busy talking. We have insisted upon our own answers. We proclaimed our own knowledge about why bad things happen, about why the rich get richer, about why the world feels so broken. We have assured ourselves that this is the way that things must be, but this life is in your hands. Our lives are in your hands.

**O Holy One, speak to us. Fill our silences. Comfort us with your love so that we may find your understanding. Trust us to find your answers when we finally tire from our own. Save us, O Holy One, with your steadfast love. Amen.**

**\*WORDS OF ASSURANCE:**

God opens your ears.

God speaks when you are silent.

God approaches you in the parade and at table  
in your denial and your praise  
to be your help. Now and always.                      Amen.

**THE PALM PARADE:                      MARK 11:1-11**

They were looking for answers. So, they went to Jerusalem. They gathered in the streets to make a way for peace. On the other side of the city, there was another procession. Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea, rode into Jerusalem with an army of horses, armored soldiers and waving banners.

On the other side of the city, near the Mount of Olives, Jesus had sent two of his disciples to go into the village and find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. He instructed them, "If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They replied with the answer Jesus had given. "The Lord needs it," they said.

Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and Jesus sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who needed answers, those who had come looking for peace, began shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

***Come. Join in the parade, you who need answers, you who came looking for peace. Join the crowds who have come looking for answers, looking for peace.***

**THE ANOINTING:                      Mark 14:1-9**

It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; for they said, "Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people."

They were looking for their own answers. They thought they knew how the world worked. While they worried, Jesus sat at the table in the house of Simon the leper. A woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head.

But some were there who said to one another in anger, “Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.” And they scolded her. She did not reply. She continued with her task. She did what she could; she anointed his body beforehand for its burial. Jesus spoke, where she did not. “Truly I tell you,” he said. “Wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”

***Come. Kneel beside her.***

***Do not speak but remember what your hands have done to proclaim the good news.***

**THE GARDEN: Mark 14:32-40**

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.” And going a little farther, Jesus threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, “Abba, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.” He came and

found them sleeping; and Jesus said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. They had no answers.

***Come. Rest in the garden,  
you who are weary, you who don't have any answers.***

**THE BETRAYAL: Mark 14:43-50**

Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. He was confident in his own answer. He thought he knew how this must end. So, he had told the chief priests, the scribes and the elders, “Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.” When he came, he went up to Jesus at once and said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. Then they laid hands on him and arrested him.

But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. They had come looking for answers. They had come looking for peace. This wasn't the way. They didn't understand. And so, they deserted him and fled.

***Come. Run into your fears, you who need answers, you who came looking for peace.***

**THE ARREST: Mark 14:53-65**

They took Jesus to the high priest; and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled. Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree. There did not have one answer. Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying, "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" But even on this point their testimony did not agree. Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?" But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?"

The chief priests, the elders and the scribes knew their answer. They thought they knew the ways of God. They thought they knew all that God could do. There was nothing that could convince them otherwise. They spit on him and blindfolded him. They beat him for the words he said.

***Come. Listen to what God might be saying.  
Listen to what God might be doing that doesn't fit with everything that you have been taught about this world.  
Listen for God to speak.***

**THE DENIAL: Mark 14:66-72**

While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, "You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth." He answered, "I do not know or understand what you are talking about."

Then the cock crowed. And the servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." But again he denied it.

Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean." But he began to curse, and he swore an oath, "I do not know this man you are talking about." At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept.

***Come. Join those who wander through courtyards, court rooms, streets and gardens.***

**INVITATION TO THE OFFERING:**

When you have no words, when you cannot find your voice, God approaches. Let us reach out to our God.  
Let us give our gifts.

**\*DEDICATION OF THE OFFERING:**

**O Holy One, Bless these gifts so that the world may know your love even when we are silent. Amen.**

**THE LORD'S PRAYER:**

**Our Father 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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

**\*BENEDICTION:**

One: Go into the world to find your voice.

**All: Listening to what God will do.**

One: Go into the world to find each other.

**All: Reaching out when we need support.**

One: Go into the world be amazed.

**All: Knowing that God is always with us.**