

## First Baptist Church in Needham

Meditations for  
Sunday, April 5, 2020  
(or whenever you are so led to  
pause, reflect, and pray)

Palm Sunday  
Edition 3



### Lighting the Candle of Life

*(You may wish to light a candle or use the photo of our Candle of Life as a focus.)*

**All:** We light the Candle of Life — a candle that represents community, spirit, and the fullness of all of life — birth and death and all of the transitions in between and beyond.

### Imagine

You are standing in the crowd at one of Jerusalem's busy gates. You hear a voice and then others singing the following hymn and shouting, "Hosanna!" Turning, you see Jesus entering the city riding a donkey...

**Hymn 174**                      *Prepare the Way of the Lord*    arr. Jacques Berthier & Taizé Community

*(This chant from the Taizé Community in France is intended to be sung or recited several times. Or, listen to it sung as a round and sing along online at:*

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=taize+prepare+the+way+of+the+lord&docid=608045924192813735&mid=D9D4A7D5C8F303064C94D9D4A7D5C8F303064C94&view=detail&FORM=VIRE> .)

Prepare the way of the Lord. Prepare the Way of the Lord,  
and all people will see the salvation of our God.

### A Reading from Matthew 21: 1-11

*(Read the text aloud. Pause and notice what image or phrase stands out or "shimmers" as you retell the story Jesus' return to Jerusalem.)*

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>If anyone says anything to you,

just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." <sup>4</sup>This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, <sup>5</sup>"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."

<sup>6</sup>The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; <sup>7</sup>they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. <sup>8</sup>A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup>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!" <sup>10</sup>When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" <sup>11</sup>The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

**All: The word of our Lord. Thanks be to God.**

## Time of Reflection

*(Choose one or more of the following notes to reflect upon the scripture text. Perhaps write your thoughts, call a friend or family member to discuss it, or allow the story to seep into your imagination.)*

- What image, word, or phrase stood out or “shimmered” to me? Reflect on its significance today. Consider holding the image or phrase as a focus of prayer this week.
- What does humility represent to me? In the face of hubris and self-assertion, how does Jesus’ example of humility speak to my life and my choices in this season of self-isolation and care?
- “Who is this?” they said. Where are the places of turmoil, upset, fear, anxiety, and questioning for me today? How may I recognize and find a way to welcome Jesus where I am, as I am, today and this week? Can I recognize and welcome Jesus into the messy, anxious, grieving places of my life?



## Reading or Special Music (Online) *Prayer of Thomas Merton*<sup>1</sup>

(You may choose to pray or recite this prayer of trust within unknowing the monk Thomas Merton wrote. Or, listen to Kate Campbell sing it online at: [www.katecampbell.com/music/for-the-living-of-these-days/](http://www.katecampbell.com/music/for-the-living-of-these-days/) and click on Prayer of Thomas Merton.)

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going  
I do not see the road ahead of me  
I cannot know for certain where it will end  
Nor do I really know myself  
And the fact that I think  
    that I am following your will  
Does not mean that I am actually doing so  
But I believe that the desire to please you  
Does in fact please you  
And I hope I have that desire  
    in all that I am doing

I hope that I will never do anything  
    apart from that desire  
And I know that if I do this  
You will lead me by the right road  
Though I may know nothing about it  
Therefore will I trust you always  
Though I may seem to be lost  
    and in the shadow of death  
I will not fear for you are ever with me  
And you will never leave me  
    to face my perils alone

## Prayers of the People

(If you have been attending Sunday worship, you know our sung prayer that brings us into the time of Prayers of the People. Enter into this time in song. If you don't know the tune, let the words be the doorway to your prayer.)

### Sung Prayer

### Hear My Prayer, O Lord

BENZENHAFFER  
arr. Holly C. Benzenhafer

Hear my prayer, O Lord. Hear my prayer, O Lord.  
I am asking, hear my prayer, O Lord.

### Prayerful Meditation

Be gracious to us, O Most Holy God,  
For even though our hearts know praise and thanks, we live in distress.  
We watch as daily life shifts again and again and a virus claims the lives of thousands.  
We keep a physical distance and yet offer all the compassion we can muster toward those  
within our reach, whose days are dominated by pain and suffering.  
We look within ourselves and see the sorrow that fills those inner places of despair.  
Come, Holy Lover of creation, our times are in your hand.  
Let your radiance shine upon us; save us with your steadfast love, for we would be your  
servants in this time and place, the bearers of your unstoppable compassion.  
Hear now our prayers for those in pain and need, for all those whose strength fails because of  
misery, the prayers we can find words for, and those that rise up through the silence within.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Words by Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude* © 1958 Abbey of Gethsemani. Music by Kate Campbell © 2006 Large River Music (BMI), Kate: Piano, Vocal.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Bankson and Deborah Sokolove, *Calling on God: Inclusive Christian Prayers for Three Years of Sundays* (Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths, 2014), 49 (paraphrased).

## **We Hold in Prayer...**

*(Many of this week's prayers are requests from members of our congregation in the past week. If you have general or specific prayer requests to share—joys as well as concerns—to share please contact Holly or Daryn to pass them along.)*

As a community of faith gathered in Spirit when we cannot be in person, we offer our hearts and voices in prayer where we are, as we are, entrusting the Spirit's moving among us and responding far beyond our individual reach and influence...

For the people of Jonesboro, Arkansas, reeling from the chaos of tornados in addition to COVID19. For them and all communities impacted by disasters and crises made further complicated and painful by the necessary precautions of the virus...and for souls living in such communities we know personally whose names we speak aloud... ***Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer...***

We hold Gretchen Leary as she awaits results from being tested for COVID19 and Jim Fuller's sister, Cathy, who has tested positive, in healing prayer and relief from their symptoms. We also hold Pat Day's daughter and sister who are living with presumed COVID19, Pastor Daryn's friend John whose wife Anna is experiencing respiratory illness, and Pastor Holly's friend Maggie Gann quarantined with an unknown respiratory virus. For their healing rest and full recovery...and for souls in these groups we know personally whose names we speak aloud... ***Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer...***

With Ernie Steeves and Clif Holbrook, we offer gratitude for scripture that challenges us to critically reflect and ponder, especially the texts I Peter 2 and the imagery in John's Revelation... and for Christians around the globe who are entering Holy Week in significantly altered ways and distances and yet continue to study, pray, and invite their faith to be stretched and transformed...***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow...***

With Andrew Thoresen, Liz Mercer, and Clif Holbrook, and Pastor Daryn, we pray for the dedicated individuals who staff healthcare and medical facilities, especially Dr. Graeme Steele, Dr. Shannon Fracchia at Mass General, Zachary (ER doctor in California), Jessica (OBGYN), and our own Anthony Calilung. For their health and wellbeing, for restorative rest and nourishment, and continued psychological and spiritual care and the steadfast support and concern of their loved ones, especially Clif and also Dr. Fracchia's husband, Topher...and for souls in these groups we know personally whose names we speak aloud... ***Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer***

With Bev and Trevor Parsons we hold persons in assisted living facilities whose routines and sense of familiarity are being altered as they are moved due to COVID19... and with Marilyn Blake, we acknowledge the isolation, loneliness, and despair at being cut off from seeing relatives and other residents and staff...for these dear souls, their beloved family and friends, and the staffs who are committed to keeping residents safe while they continue to work under the threat

of the virus... and for souls in these groups we know personally whose names we speak aloud... *Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer...*

With Kathy Dahill, Katie Johnson, and Liz Mercer we offer thanks for space, perspective, and time to breathe as well as time to be creative that being home is allowing many people ... *Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.* And with Nancy Twombly, we pray for people who are now working from home and finding their workload greatly increased and the shift to staying home stressful and difficult... and for souls in these groups we know personally whose names we speak aloud... *Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer...*

With Liz Mercer and Dot Kinney, we acknowledge the longing to be able to be in community again and await in hope and certainty for the day we are able to worship in word and song in the same space. And with Louise Mason, we are grateful for the gift of song that is not bound by space but can be shared together over the phone...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow...*

We hold in prayer Stan Gibson's extended family. For their health and well-being and the ongoing concerns we hold for loved ones with whom we cannot be near. We also offer prayer for Nancy Twombly's niece Emma who has lost her job for the duration of the stay-home order. For her and the millions of persons facing financial instability and uncertainty, who have lost health coverage, and who are struggling to maintain basic living obligations...and for souls in these groups we know personally whose names we speak aloud...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer...*

With Jim Fuller, Pastor Daryn, and Pastor Holly we offer prayers for students of all ages who are endeavoring to continue learning through trauma, uncertainty, disruption, disappointment, fear, limited resources, and unplanned shifts in "classroom" space, especially Kathryn House as she prepares to defend her doctoral dissertation and Lynn Cooper as she defends her DMin project. For educators who are learning new technologies on the fly as they work tirelessly to provide adequate and effective teaching, administrators and staff who are maintaining and flexing educational infrastructures, and for parents who are now attempting to ensure children are not falling behind while sheltering at home...for our own FBC Youth and for souls in these groups we know personally whose names we speak aloud...*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer...*

We celebrate with Anthony Calilung and Clif Holbrook who welcomed Pete, a beagle/basset dog into their home prior to COVID19. For the unexpected benefits and joys of becoming an animal's new human family and the comfort and goodness animals at home and in nature offer us each day...and for the beloved pets we now name...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow...*

With Marilyn Blake, Louise Mason, John Crimmings, Clif Holbrook, and Pastor Holly, we offer thanks for the forms of technology that are making this experience more bearable. For phone calls, internet, and telecommuting as well as movies, gaming, and forms of entertainment and education...and for the persons who continue to work each day to ensure these services work effectively and continuously...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.*

With Pastor Holly, we speak the name Barbara Bennett Sloan Young who died March 28 at 103 years. Celebrating her long, full life, we hold the four generations who knew and loved her in prayers of condolence and deep peace...And we speak the name of beloved children's author, Tomie dePaola, age 85, who died March 30 in New Hampshire. For his celebration of God's amazing diversity and beauty through art and literature, we are grateful. For these lives, the lives lost to COVID19, and the souls who grieve this day... *Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer...*

For Gretchen Leary and Katie Johnson who celebrated birthdays in the past week...*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.*

And for the prayers of our hearts that you, Holy One, know even when words cannot hold them... *Hear my prayer, O Lord.*

### The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

### Hymn 505

### *All the Way My Savior Leads Me*

### ALL THE WAY

(Sing or read the words of this hymn by Fanny J. Crosby. Or, listen to Chris Estes' version of it online at: <https://vimeo.com/136015845> .)

All the way my Savior leads me,  
What have I to ask beside?  
Can I doubt His tender mercy,  
Who through life has been my Guide?  
Heav'nly peace, divinest comfort,  
Here by faith in Him to dwell!  
For I know, whate'er befall me,  
Jesus doeth all things well;  
For I know, whate'er befall me,  
Jesus doeth all things well.

All the way my Savior leads me,  
Cheers each winding path I tread,  
Gives me grace for every trial,  
Feeds me with the living Bread.  
Though my weary steps may falter

And my soul athirst may be,  
Gushing from the Rock before me,  
Lo! A spring of joy I see;  
Gushing from the Rock before me,  
Lo! A spring of joy I see.

All the way my Savior leads me,  
Oh, the fullness of His love!  
Perfect rest to me is promised  
In my Father's house above.  
When my spirit, clothed immortal,  
Wings its flight to realms of day  
This my song through endless ages:  
Jesus led me all the way;  
This my song through endless ages:  
Jesus led me all the way.

## Offering

(Online giving is available on our website! Check <https://www.fbcneedham.org> for a Paypal donation link. You may also continue to support the ongoing ministry of the church by sending a check to the church office via mail to: **First Baptist Church in Needham**, 858 Great Plain Avenue, Needham MA 02492. Please indicate it is your offering or pledge on the check.)

## Doxology

OLD HUNDREDTH

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise God, all creatures here below.  
Praise God above ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

## Benediction

(Speak these words of benediction knowing that you are part of a loving community of faith. If you lit a candle at the beginning, you may wish to blow it out now.)

One: Our blessing to one another is that we are here for one another, that we are with one another, that we celebrate and remember one another along the journey.

**ALL: We extinguish the Candle of Life, but the Light continues to shine within us. As we pass the peace we carry the Light of the Candle of Life from this hour into this world and beyond, offering peace, hope and light wherever the journey leads.**

## Passing of the Peace

(Picture in your mind's eye the faces of beloved souls with whom you would share the peace of Christ in person if you could, and offer each one your blessing of peace.)

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

**ALL: And also with you.**

One: Let us greet one another in peace as we prepare for the journey ahead.



---

Hymns under copyright are used by permission under CCLI # 763542.

## Announcements

**The Church Office and Building are currently closed.** Pastoral and office staff are working from home. Office voicemail and email are being checked regularly. If you have a pastoral concern, contact Pastor Daryn or Pastor Holly by email, phone, or text.

**Watch your mail/email for Holy Week Worship Resources for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday!**

**Needham Interfaith Clergy Association** is offering a weekly collection of online meditations from our different traditions. Both Pastor Daryn and Pastor Holly are contributing. You can access the **second episode** on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NigNRm-cHIE&t=851s> and find other episodes by searching "Needham Interfaith Clergy." Also, find the links on their Facebook page where you can Like and Follow them for regular updates.

**Livestreaming Services:** Many congregations are offering their services online both in real time or recorded to watch or listen as you are able. Here are a few you may wish to virtually "visit":

**Harvard Memorial Chapel** – Available live on Sundays 11:00-noon on WHRB (95.3 FM radio or on online at <https://memorialchurch.harvard.edu/sunday-services-0> and then click "Listen Live" on the current Sunday). Recorded services are available on the same link under "Listen to Sunday Sermons" along with daily Morning Prayers under "Listen to Morning Prayers."

**First Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.** – Available online on Sundays 11:00-noon at <https://www.firstbaptistdc.org/upcoming-worship> and then follow links to Facebook Live. Prior recorded sermons are at <https://www.firstbaptistdc.org/listen-to-sermons>.

**Boston University's Marsh Chapel** – Available live on Sundays 11:00-noon on WBUR (90.9 FM radio or on online at <https://www.wbur.org/> and then click "Listen Live"). Recorded services are available as a podcast on iTunes or other RSS feeders (search: Marsh Chapel).

**Northminster Baptist Church, Jackson, MS** – Available livestreaming online on Sundays 11:30-12:30 Eastern at <https://www.northminsterbaptist.live> . Prior recorded services are at <https://www.northminsterbaptist.live/on-demand> and then click on "Playlist" to select a date.

**Photo Attribution:** Paschal Candle (2018), Labyrinth, and Chapel Altar at FBC Needham by ©Holly C. Benzenhafer 2020. Use with permission.