

**April 10, 2022 Palm Sunday/Passion Sunday**  
**Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope**

**Luke 19: 28-40, Isaiah 50:4-9a,**  
**Philippians 2:5-11, Luke 22:14—23:56**

**Dear friends in Christ Jesus, grace and peace, liberation and justice, to you. Amen**

**A week or so ago, on a morning walk, I stopped by a small lake not too far from home.**

The water was open along the shore.

Father out thin, precarious ice was still there and

ducks and birds were playing in the chilly gray morning air.

I paused for a short moment to see them and then went on, strangely conscious that I was flitting.

I looked it up, flitting F L I T T I N G is a verb that means to move swiftly or lightly.

That day at the lake, I was flitting.

I made a mental note that on sabbatical, beginning in just a couple of weeks,

I'd pause more, dwell more by that lake and others,

let myself be less rushed by the next thing,

which in this case included getting home to a child who needed to get to school.

Completely worthy, yes, and yet there is something important, even vital about dwelling, resting, watching.

**Over the years, Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday have come to be joined.**

The service begins with the story of that first Palm Sunday, this year told by the gospel writer Luke.

On the front boulevard we lean in to hear the proclamation, palms in hand, processing into the sanctuary.

Somewhere right about now in the service, with the other readings,

we make the transition to the passion, to the cross.

As we conclude our service today a number of you will take turns reading the story of the passion

as retold in the Spark Story bible.

In this way, we hold the tension of the week:

The flitting yelps of affirmation with which we begin,

And the shouts of crucify him that come all too quickly.

We remind ourselves of the twists and turns,

the complex politics and strategy and emotion,

the way that God **worked** liberation and life, in the midst of death, so long ago,

and the way that God **works** liberation and life, in the midst of death, still today.

**Dear ones, it is simply too easy and,** frankly, too tempting, to move into this “week of weeks,” flitting.

Moving swiftly, lightly.

Of course, there is much that pulls us: kids will need to get to school,

tasks must be completed, and taxes, too,

there is work and service, study and rest, Easter preparations and surely more.

I get it, I hear you, I do.

**This week, though, I invite you to pause with me, to dwell.**

To take a big deep breath and let the Holy Spirit do her thing with you.

We haven't been able to gather in person for Holy Week for two years.

Listen with fresh ears to the Passion Story today.

What do you notice? What do you wonder about?

Jot it down, reflect on it.

**Make plans to come to the services this week or join online.**

It is a rich, rich week.

**Maundy Thursday's service is built on the commandments of Jesus.**

Maundy is from the Latin word, Maundatum, commandments:

Remember, Eat, Drink, Love.

So on Thursday we'll have a special time of confession and forgiveness.

We'll savor the bread, sharing Holy Communion.

At the end of the service in the evening we'll strip the altar of its colorful cloths and worship materials,  
moving into the stark simplicity of the cross.

**On Good Friday we'll hear the crucifixion story in word and song.**

We'll have the opportunity to kneel by the cross, the place where Jesus was killed.

It's a solemn service, quiet and beautiful, often deeply moving.

**Easter Vigil is on Saturday evening.**

We begin outside blessing and lighting the new pascal candle,

hearing the salvation stories retold from the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament.

We'll remember our baptisms.

Finally we'll come into the sanctuary to break the Lenten fast with a joyous Holy Communion.

It's quite a service and if you haven't experienced it, do try it out.

**If you can't make it to worship, and even if you can, find your own way to dwell in this holy week.**

Make a space—time for prayer, a ritual of deep breathing.

Read the stories, pick out a hymn or psalm or two that will ground you, try poetry or meditating on artwork.

Listen to the news alert for the crosses of our time:

the suffering and the violence,

the brokenness, the pain and death.

It is all around, in Ukraine, of course and closer to home, too.

How are we in solidarity in these spaces of pain?

How is liberation getting worked out?

Where are their cries of Hosanna, save us? and where do we need new life?

**This Holy Week, Join me in slowing down our gait, slow down our pace.**

Of course we could flit, moving quickly,

but this sacred season demands our fullest attention, our greatest presence.

Take a breath, a deep breath...

**Yesterday, after the Memorial Service for Mike Fingerson my family texted.**

"We went to see the herons today. They are amazing. You should stop on your way home."

There is a rockery on two islands in the Mississippi near Marshall Terrace Park,

north of Lowry Avenue in Northeast Minneapolis.

I hadn't been there yet this year, but it's a favorite spot, so I stopped ...and it was amazing.

Literally 100-some Great Blue Herons (I counted the best I could),

nesting,

bringing more sticks to add to the nests,

perhaps they had eggs in those nests, I don't know, but they were doing their heron thing.

I could have flitted home, plenty to do.

But instead I listened to the tug and I paused,

still dressed for church,

watching these graceful herons...being herons,

praising their maker,

savoring a sunny spring late afternoon.

**Beloved ones, today, this week,** pause,  
dwell at the cross,  
rest in awe as our sacred story unfolds again, and find your place in that story.  
Don't be afraid of the tensions, the emotion, the complexity.  
In fact, look for it, feel it—it's been a year.

**This isn't just a 2000 year old story that we're retelling again for the umpteenth time.**  
No, this is a story of saving love, of solidarity,  
God's solidarity with humankind and our solidarity with one another and creation.  
It's a story of resilience, that is being replayed again and again.  
And we, my friends, are part of it,  
if only we dare to slow down and trust our Savior's love. Amen.