

WORSHIP SERVICE PLAN

April 13, 2025 • Build Disciples • Palm/Passion Weekend

Matthew 21:1-17

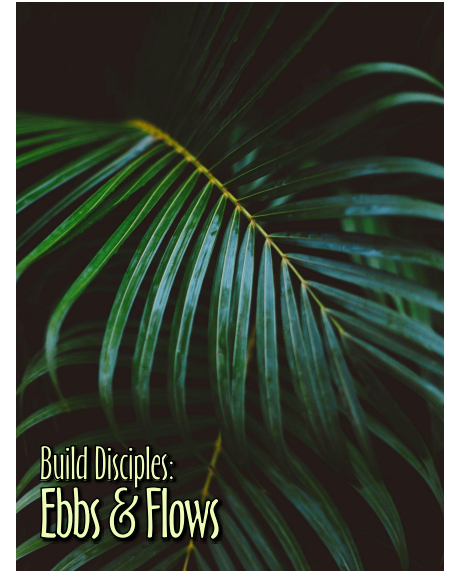
"Ebbs and Flows"

Being a disciple means times of greatness: both in celebration and in conflict.

Preparation for Worship

Gather these items for worship. If you don't have a particular item, fret not:

- a piece of purple cloth
- an end table or stand
- a plate
- a cup
- a glass or bowl of water
- a lighter/match
- a palm or scarf
- a computer or internet-accessible device
- a thank you card to God for something this week



For each item you have, thank God for the provision. For each piece you do not have, thank God you don't need it. Place the table/stand in the area you plan to worship. If more than one person will be present, place the table in the middle of where you will be seated. Drape the cloth over it. Arrange the cup, plate, glass of water, and other items on the table. Keep the Bible in front of you.

Questions for the announcement loop

In preparing for Worship, consider the following:

- How do you measure how well you are doing as a disciple?
- How much danger are you willing to tolerate from being a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- What in your life are you willing to put to death for the sake of your faith?
- What could someone learn about being a disciple from observing your life?

Prelude

(In-person only) *"Ride On, King Jesus"*
arr. Anna Laura Page

Reading of the Palms

Matthew 21:1-11 (CEB)

Jesus enters Jerusalem as the King.

¹ When they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus gave two disciples a task. ² He said to them, "Go into the village over there. As soon as you enter, you will find a donkey tied up and a colt with it. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, say that their master needs them." He sent them off right away. ⁴ Now this happened to fulfill what the prophet said, ⁵ Say to Daughter Zion, "Look, your king is coming to you, humble and

riding on a donkey, and on a colt the donkey's offspring." ⁶ The disciples went and did just as Jesus had ordered them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and laid their clothes on them. Then he sat on them.

⁸ Now a large crowd spread their clothes on the road. Others cut palm branches off the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds in front of him and behind him shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" ¹⁰ And when Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up. "Who is this?" they asked. ¹¹ The crowds answered, "It's the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

Palm Processional

(In-person & online) *"Hosanna, Loud Hosanna"*
(GTG #197)

Welcome to this service of Worship, We are glad you are with us! We have a few Community Notes for you to consider as we worship throughout the week...

Welcome Visitors!

We are glad you are here! Our nursery is in the Education Building and our restrooms are in the buildings other than the Sanctuary.

Passion Is a Christian Way of Life

What's your thing? Is it sewing? Hunting? Movies? Coin collecting? Music? Painting? Pets? A basketball team? Politics? Family? Your faith? We sometimes use the word "passion" to describe a hobby or interest. But God thinks of us as more than just a hobby or an interest. When we talk about "the Passion", it's a way of saying that God put everything on the line for us. It, of course, begs the question: what are we willing to put on the line for God? And does anything we offer come close to resembling "everything"? As we enter into Holy Week, don't shy away from the hard questions raised by both the life and *death* of Jesus Christ. Rather than contemplate it all in fear, allow the reality of God's love to overwhelm and inspire and spur.

Always in Season

Our study of "Building Disciples" has led us to realize that faith is about more than just moments or fashion or trends. It's about faith finding its way into the ordinary, every day movements of life. Both good and bad, uplifting and challenging. How is your faith measured against hard times? How is it measured against *good* times? As you enter Holy Week consider the consistency of your faith in your life.

Prayer Chains

Please turn in your Prayer Chains! As we collect them during Holy Week, we'll use them to adorn our worship spaces with the names and prayers of our community for Easter.

Time & Talent Survey

Where do your skills and passions meet the needs of the church? The Administrative Life committee will be conducting a survey the month of April. Please complete the survey located in the bulletin and return it to the ushers or church office. We need willing people to call upon. Our church offers many opportunities to share your unique passions and skills.

Compass Communion Service

On Sunday, April 13th, we are hosting our worship service with Communion at Compass Health and Rehabilitation. It's a special one as we will celebrate Easter (early!) with them. We can use your help to

make it happen! We need folks to prepare the Communion elements, to gather residents who need assistance, to help residents during the service, and getting folks back in place. We meet at the door closest to the Chapel (facing the front, the door to the right end of the building) at 1:30pm.

Holy Week Is Here!

This weekend is Palm/Passion Sunday, a time where we reflect on Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and the confrontation of his destiny with the cross. As the gateway to Holy Week, this is a great way to turn our attention not just to what God did for us, but what God is doing with us.

Then Thursday we celebrate the Last Supper. There will be opportunities to participate in getting your feet washed (ceremonially) and to gather with your fellow disciples around tables to share the bread and cup.

Friday is our Tenebrae Service (which means darkness) where we reflect on the death of Jesus Christ. We will do this principally with the Good Friday Cantata, which promises to be both a sober reflection on the Passion and a celebration of what Jesus was willing to do.

It's a LOT of church! But they are all opportunities to set aside our routines and to zero in on what God's love for us cost God. You are encouraged to participate as much as you can.

(10am only) Greet one another in Christ!

(10am only) "Make Me A Servant" CEL# 669)

**Make me a servant, humble and meek;
Lord, let me lift up those who are weak.
And may the prayer of my heart always be:
Make me a servant, make me a servant,
Make me a servant today. (1 X)**

Being a disciple means times of greatness: both in celebration and in conflict.

In this moment, let us take a deep breath, silence our devices, and continue in worship together. As you are able in heart and body, let us remain standing together...(pause)

Prayer of Confession/Preparation

Sometimes we forget what it cost God for us to have faith. In fact, we often overlook what faith should be costing us. That's just wrong. It's important to talk about our shortcomings so that we're ready to hear what God has to say. Let us begin with silent prayer...

(Please pray silently...)

Pray: Loving God, you looked over Jerusalem and wept. You understood well the history. You understood well what was coming. And you entered Jerusalem anyway. Thank you for that. Now you look over our cities. You look over our schools, our homes, our families, our bank accounts, our choices, our apathy, our politics, , our wars, our isolations, our conquests, our assumptions, even our hopes, and weep. You understand well our history. You understand well what is coming. And you enter Jerusalem, enter our hearts, anyway. Thank you for that. Forgive us when we don't even try. Forgive us when we let the fear take over and talk ourselves out of doing what you direct, even when it seems impossible. Help us see what you see and love as you do. Bolster our faith, please, to face life as you do. May we come to reflect your generosity as enthusiastically as we receive it. Thank you for listening, God. Amen.

(10am only) Assurance of Pardon

God's love can change everything, even the power of our sins over us. And it is God's will that we have this power:

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

(10am only) Gloria Patri (Glory to God)

Glory be to the Father

And to the Son

And to the Holy Ghost

As it was in the beginning

It is now and ever shall be

World without end: Amen, amen.

Please be seated...

Reading of Scripture

Say: The Word of God doesn't just inform: it reveals. The Word of God doesn't just tell us the truth, it

empowers us to live our true path. The Word of God, by God's own Spirit, teaches us to live. Let us be open to this gift of God and ask for help to understand. Let us pray...(everyone sings)

Pray/Sing: "Lead Me, Lord" CEL #695

Lead me, Lord,

Lead me in Your righteousness;

Make Your way plain before my face.

Read: Matthew 21:12-17 (CEB)

Jesus clears out the Temple.

¹² Then Jesus went into the temple and threw out all those who were selling and buying there. He pushed over the tables used for currency exchange and the chairs of those who sold doves.

¹³ He said to them, "It's written, My house will be called a house of prayer. But you've made it a hideout for crooks."

¹⁴ People who were blind and lame came to Jesus in the temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and legal experts saw the amazing things he was doing and the children shouting in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were angry. ¹⁶ They said to Jesus, "Do you hear what these children are saying?"

"Yes," he answered. "Haven't you ever read, From the mouths of babies and infants you've arranged praise for yourself?" ¹⁷ Then he left them and went out of the city to Bethany and spent the night there.

One: For the Word of God in Scripture, for the Word of God among us, for the Word of God within us...

All: Thanks be to God!

Children's Sermon

Adults, you'll need:

- a plate of cookies
- to be sure to wait for answers!

"Just for Us"

- (showing the cookies) Do you know what these are? Yes! they are cookies!
- What if I told you that these cookies are for you? I mean, God gave them to me to give to you. Is that okay? (Eat one of the cookies without giving

any away...) Mmm...these are just REALLY good! I'm so glad God blessed you in this way...

- (Hopefully, the children protest. If they don't you might provoke their protest with a question: "Is it fair that I eat cookies meant for you?")
- I *know*! It's not right for me to eat these cookies when they were meant for you! Our faith is like that. God blesses us with so much. But those blessings are not meant for us alone. We're supposed to share them. God means for us to share what we get from God. When we don't, we are keeping blessings away from the people for which they were meant.
- So when you are around the people who care about you, ask them about all the ways they share with people. Then talk about how you can be sharing also.
- Don't forget to pray!

Anthem: "Greater Love" by Stan Pethel

"Ebbs and Flows"

It's quite the swing, isn't it? We go from entering Jerusalem in triumph to turning over tables to healings and finally to an argument.

Given the climate surrounding tariffs and the world economy, we might feel like we get how quickly things can develop and turn. I've even heard people describe what they experience as the changing will and norms of our own culture.

Part of the challenge of Palm Sunday is realizing that nothing really changed, at least, not yet. Jesus was determined and consistent in his mission and determination to see through God's will. The people were consistent that they wanted someone to come liberate them: from financial, political, emotional and spiritual hardship. The problems came when the expectations around those two desires came into conflict.

Sure, context matters. But consider what God was coming to do. Jesus came to invade and conquer hearts and minds. To change the underlying culture of the nation and everyone the nation touched. As he mentions to a crowd in an argument with leadership:

"The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they changed their hearts and lives in response to Jonah's preaching—and one greater than Jonah is here."

Whew! Ok, we get it! We need to change. We need to have a transformation. But the part that keeps getting missed is that it was (and is) to be an *internal* transformation.

You see, the people were conditioned for their expectations around the Messiah's mission to be rooted in *political* transformation. Wealth transformation. They saw the miracles, especially the healings, as evidence that the God who can do anything coming to change their *fortunes*. They saw the arguments with the leadership and the open challenges to the Roman authorities as a sign that revolution was coming. It's no wonder that they were cheering Jesus on at the beginning of the week and crying out for his blood by the end. They weren't being inconsistent. They were just wrong about what Jesus came to do. When it turns out Jesus did all of this stuff, said all those things, but wasn't actually going to "change" what they thought, it *felt* like a steep betrayal. And Jesus would pay for that with his life.

And, listen, I get it. I get it deeply. There are probably people in our community that feel that way about me (NOT AT ALL that I am Jesus, thank God). But when I started, people had expectations about what I would do and why and how and I didn't meet those expectations. In our case, some people left in their anger. So you can imagine how people felt about *Jesus*. With so much at stake, literally life and death, it's no wonder that the life of Jesus would soon end with his death at the hands of his own people.

So it should come as no surprise that *human* Jesus' fit of rage in the Temple is consistent with that same mission to change hearts and lives.

(Online Read: Matthew 21:12-17 CEB; Jesus clears out the Temple.)

It really was a big deal. **The Scriptures clearly call for sacrifices to be made at the Temple.** And the

Scriptures prescribe to exacting detail what the nature of the sacrifices should be, down to animal type and quality. The Pharisees and other temple workers took it upon themselves to judge the quality of said sacrifices. This was one of the most visible ways of showing not only reverence for God but loyalty to the nation in the face of the Roman occupation. Coming here and getting it right was a huge part of both personal and national identity.

But the journey to Jerusalem could be fraught, especially from long distances. Not only could it be hard to maintain your animals on the way, sometimes bandits could raid and make off with your sacrifices (to sell later, maybe even sell back to YOU). It was so much easier to buy what you needed once you got there, but how can you make sure your animals were sufficient? **And so, as a practical solution, the leadership set up shop just inside the Temple walls.** Merchants and other vendors could bring supplies that passed muster with the leadership, thus ensuring that devotees got what they needed. And, of course, the vendors had a steady profit and the leadership got their coffers taken care of as well. In addition, Rome was satisfied because the leadership could make sure a Temple tax from both the leadership and the merchants was collected and passed on to the authorities. The people got their assurances and convenience. The system just worked. It was a win-win. Everybody got *paid*.

Except God.

Because of the number of hands that dipped into each purchase, merchants had to charge a little more than they might otherwise. You know... to cover expenses. It's just business. And on high Holy days and festivals, you had the crush of people who had no where else to go to get what they needed. So a little overcharging didn't hurt anyone...right? And they were providing a service. If people wanted it to be cheaper then they should bring their own animals—sheep, birds, even cattle—to sacrifice. Just don't be surprised if a few in the leadership—on the take from merchants—got a little heavy-handed with the denials and declarations of inappropriateness for a person's sacrifices. If you wanted *guarantees* then people needed to get PAID! You can imagine it got so lucrative that the

very thing that was supposed to ensure the identity of the people with none other than God had become perverted into a scheme of abject oppression and theft. I mean, it didn't start OUT that way...it just sort of...morphed. **It wasn't anybody's fault, exactly...it just...was.** Look: what did it matter as long as the Law was followed and God was glorified? Right?

You know, I imagine that's how it started with *indulgences* around the time of Martin Luther. The Roman Catholic Church was the dominant political force on the planet. Pilgrims didn't need to travel to Rome to pay homage or anything. But they did have an ambitious building program. In fact, to this day, you can visit its effects. Vast, towering, imposing structures that defy time and spur the imagination. Buildings that speak to God's majesty with appointments and organ and choir spaces to match. The great stone church in Ulm, Germany, still stands as a testament to the power of this program. The net worth of the Vatican can be traced in large part to the program of indulgences.

Basically, it worked like this: your Aunt Sue or your Uncle Sal, weren't *bad*, but they weren't quite good enough to make it all the way into Heaven. And so they would sit in Purgatory: a weigh station for close calls on salvation or damnation. But indulgences were set up to ensure passage. Depending on the offense, and depending on the priest listening, prescriptions could range from one or two Hail Marys, a Lord's Prayer (or five), or some other prayer, and money, always money. But this would land you a certificate that indulged their sin and allowed them safe passage through the pearly gates. It was a win-win. The people got their assurances and convenience and the Church got their buildings (and a little cash on the side). It all served generations of families.

You can probably guess what happened. The money was too plentiful and easy and good to pass up. Corruption ensued. And lots of church leadership got in on the take. City leaders got in on it, giving a pass to things Church leaders needed. Everybody benefitted. You can imagine it got so lucrative that the very thing that was supposed to ensure the identity of the people with none other than God had become perverted into a scheme of

abject oppression and theft. I mean, it didn't start OUT that way...it just sort of...morphed. **It wasn't anybody's fault, exactly...it just...was.** Look: what did it matter as long as the Law was followed and God was glorified? Right?

That was all good until the invention of the printing press and Martin Luther—a professor and priest—started a protest movement that would become the Protestant Reformation. They turned the tables over on decades of Church doctrine and the reverberations are felt to this day. We wouldn't be here as Presbyterians without it.

It didn't get that bad overnight. It never does.

Like the proverbial frog in the pan that doesn't know it's getting slow-cooked to frying, everyone, including the leadership didn't know how bad it was until someone said something.

So back to the Temple. Jesus has just been cheered as the Messiah, entering triumphantly into the capital city. He is practically, historically, emotionally declared king. So what does the king do? What's the move? What's the call to arms Jesus will use to threaten the Romans or even the leadership?

Well...not what they thought.

He turns over the tables and chairs, it says, places for commerce and complacency. He turns over complicity. And he quotes Scripture for good measure.

Now, I have to take issue with the CEB version here. As much as I adore this translation, there's no way on God's green earth that Jesus conveys the rationale for what he did without an exclamation point! Y'all...you KNOW Jesus was angry. You have to know God gets angry. We, who are created in the image of God, get angry. Anger itself is not a quirk or defect in the system. We're SUPPOSED to get angry about stuff.

But I must ask: what have you experienced that has moved you to turn over tables? What in your faith life has inspired you to kick over chairs? Don't we have plenty to choose from in this world?

Children and Adults are being sold and traded in slavery today. People's entire cultures are being made *extinct* as we sit here. People are being executed only to be exonerated *after* the fact. We tolerate, even welcome, people lying to us, mistreating us, even abusing us, on a scale never seen before in history. People who should be given grace are given cruelty and those who should be held accountable are placed on pedestals. Stupidity is being recognized as genius and compassion is declared weakness. We call ourselves protecting the church's interests even though loving our neighbor is low on our list of priorities.

It didn't get that bad overnight. It never does.

Like the proverbial frog in the pan that doesn't know it's getting slow-cooked to frying, everyone, including the leadership don't know how bad it was until someone says something.

It reminds me of an episode of "The Big Bang Theory" a sitcom that's in syndication. The scene is a character named Sheldon and his girlfriend, Amy, sitting at a meal together. He has been whining and whining and whining about having to decide which gaming console to buy, to the exclusion of all others concerns. **Amy, in a futile attempt to be helpful has been listening to him.** She quietly asks for the butter to be passed. Sheldon absent-mindedly goes to the refrigerator and retrieves the butter, talking about his problem the whole time. He then places the butter on the counter and sits back down, still talking about his decision. Amy again asks for the butter. Sheldon then stops and accuses Amy of not listening to him or taking his concerns seriously. She then asks questions of Sheldon about his impossible decision, escalating her incredulity at how impossible it is to have to make this choice. Sheldon then says, "What do you think I should do?"

She responds, pounding the table with each word, "PLEASE PASS THE BUTTER!!!"

I can't help but wonder if we drove Jesus to this point.

In overthinking God's will or just flat not listening to the simplicity of God's will and overcomplicating it, we end up paralyzed in making any real gains in our discipleship or

understanding. And in our pursuit of trying to shape God's will to suit our own purposes, we end up perverting it. Y'all, I'm just telling you, that's what's going on with Christian Nationalism. That's what's going on with the Prosperity Gospel. That's what's going on anytime we take God's commands to love God with everything and to love our neighbor as ourselves and try to qualify them to death. Our faith demands better of us.

We must allow room for our faith not just to align with our priorities but to challenge them as well. We must make space for the possibility that we are more than just off on a few points of doctrine: we really got it wrong. But we must also allow that the grace of God is sufficient and able to enter our hearts and minds just as triumphantly as Jerusalem. We have to remember that turning over tables is a possibility of Jesus with us. **Being a disciple means times of greatness: both in celebration and in conflict.**

As we enter this Holy Week together, let us be mindful of the stakes, and be thankful to God that even life itself was not a price too high for God to redeem us, even after everything. Amen.

Song of Reflection

"O Blest Are They Who in Their Love" (GTG #208)

Offering

God chooses to love us, abundantly. We should respond by choosing to be loving, abundantly. This is why we should give and share what we have and who we are. Let us reflect together on what has been given...

Offertory

"O Sacred Head, Now Wounded"

Doxology

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow
Praise God, all creatures here below
Praise God, above you heavenly hosts
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

Blessing (online only)

**Let there be no doubt, Great God: you love us.
And we are grateful. Let there be no doubt,
Great God: we should be loving in turn. As we**

receive the gifts you provide, may the gifts we are meant to be emerge. In the great name of Jesus Christ, we pray this together. Amen.

Prayer of the People

- Say: The Lord be with you...and also with you. Let us pray...
- "Come, Bring Your Burdens to God" (GTG #851)
**Come, bring your burdens to God;
Come, bring your burdens to God;
Come, bring your burdens to God,
For Jesus will never say no. (2X)**
- Loving God, the Passion seems like an impossible step. While we are more than glad for you to die for us, the idea of us dying for others is a difficult prospect under the best circumstances. But empower us to be heroic in our love nevertheless. Help us pay closer attention to what we *can* do rather than what we can't. Help us not be afraid to be overwhelmed in our passion for you and to act accordingly, even in anger. Teach us to govern our tempers, though, please God.
- We've been talking a lot about what it means to be your disciples. And you haven't been teaching from a lofty, safe space of distance. You've been close. You are close. And you enter Jerusalem, enter us, willing to die. Our love might never come close to that, Lord. But we owe it to you to try. So teach us, please, when it is time to turn over tables, to enter our Jerusalems, and help us have courage to see it through.
- Thus, let us be Godly people. Let us make a habit of compassion and consolation. Let us make second nature your grace and mercy and sense of justice. Let us set aside safety and embrace risk-taking with you. May your healing balm reach through us to those around us, especially those on our prayer lists and those we will come to know. Help us love and give love. Help us value mercy as you do. Despite our collective answer of violence, of disdain, of division, of cynicism, to your love, may we truly be washed by you and embrace hope instead...(take time to name your own prayers)
- Thank you for believing in us, Thank you for transforming us. Thank you for teaching us, even how to pray when words fail us, saying,
- **Pray: 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. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Hymn of Sending

(In-person) *"My Song Is Love Unknown"*
(GTG #209)

Sending & Benediction

Let us say together our benediction...

Being a disciple means times of greatness: both in celebration and in conflict.

(raise your hands and say) "Get up, take heart, Jesus is still calling you..."; Go, and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guide your hearts and minds this day and forever more. Amen!

Sing: *"I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me"*
(GTG #700)

**I'm gonna live so God can use me,
Anywhere, Lord, any time!
I'm gonna live so God can use me,
Anywhere, Lord, any time! (2X)**

(10am only) Postlude

"And Could It Be that I Should Gain?"
arr. Victor Labenske