

Week of Palm Sunday

First recite the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the weekly section of the Small Catechism. Then read the Proper and assigned Scripture reading followed by the devotion. Conclude with singing the hymn of the week.

Weekly Catechism section: Third Petition of the Lord's Prayer (Luther's Small Catechism)

Hymn of the Week: A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth (TLH #142)



Monday - Introit (Psalm 22:19, 21, 1, 7-8, 11)

Read Psalm 22.

Our *Introit*, taken from Psalm 22, records our Lord's words during his passion. Jesus was troubled in his soul as the hour of his death came closer. He was stirred up with the anticipation of suffering and dying. But our *Introit* reveals that this was both in anguish as well as in confidence. The anguish was that he would suffer such awful torment. But his confidence was that he would save sinners. After riding into Jerusalem he says (John 12:27-28a): "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name." Even before he entered Jerusalem, he said (Luke 12:49-50): "I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!"

Jesus' soul was troubled all the way to death (Matt 26:38). He was troubled by the sin of the whole world, which he took as he became a curse before God in our place (Gal 3:13). So we hear in our *Introit* the cries of this man of sorrows: "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" This was the fire he brought to the earth -- God's judgment on sin, which he bore in his own body. And yet, amidst such anguish, his glory is revealed in his salvation of sinners. He says on the night of his betrayal (John 17:1-2): "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, *that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.*" This is our Lord's boldness in his passion, that by it he would save sinners from eternal death. Therefore, our *Introit* begins with these words of confidence, "But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me!" Even in his humiliation, he was confident in his divine mission. As St. Peter says (1 Pet 2:23), "He committed

himself to Him who judges righteously." As we enter Holy Week, may we ponder, with repentant hearts, his anguish as well as his confidence to save us poor sinners.

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Tuesday - Old Testament Lesson (Zechariah 9:9-12)

Read Zechariah 9.

The prophet Zechariah prophesied during the early reign of the Persian Empire. Our Old Testament lesson from chapter 9 of Zechariah describes the coming destruction for many of the surrounding coastal cities of great influence, like the cities in Phoenicia and Philistia. They would be conquered by the Greeks and later by the Romans. God brought this about as judgment against their sins. But he also promised that there would be a remnant even among these unclean nations. God would gather for himself people who trust in him, and this would be his reign. So in this context, with empires rising and falling, and new ones taking their place, Zechariah tells of the king promised by God. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He *is* just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey."

This is the King of Kings who brings salvation in humility, riding on a donkey. He will cut off the armies of Jerusalem, Ephraim, and all Israel. And he will rule the whole world with his gospel of peace. By his blood of the new covenant, he will free sinners from being sent to the waterless pit of hell. His subjects are known as prisoners of hope. This is because we are strangers in this world, our flesh is captive to sin (Rom 7:14), and we endure with the certain hope of salvation. Christ, our King, the Son of David, rules us by taking our sin away. He died for us. His cross was his throne. There the wrath of God, which causes every war on the earth, is satisfied. Today people think they can stop wars by talking about some quality supposedly common in man, which, if released, would give peace a chance. But man is by nature corrupted by sin and hostile to God. Christ does not conquer by manipulating people into thinking that they are good and can get along if they only put away their differences. Christ conquers by taking away sin by his death and thereby sending out his Word in his resurrection. Thus, Zechariah says that the sons of Zion subdue the sons of Greece. In other words, the fruit Jesus bears by his death overcomes the unbelief of the Gentiles. Such fruit is salvation for all nations.

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Wednesday - Gradual (Psalm 73:23-24, 1)

Read Psalm 73.

The *Gradual* for Palm Sunday is from Psalm 73, a song of Asaph. The Psalm begins with an assertion that God is good to Israel. He then clarifies who Israel is: to such as are pure of heart. To have a pure heart is to have faith in God's promises. This is not something anyone can accomplish in himself. Only Jesus accomplished such faith. But consider what Jesus did. He already had everything. He has been equal with God the Father from eternity, sharing his own glory. But he emptied himself. In other words, while he remained true God with all divine powers, he humbled himself to the form of a servant. He does this to render obedience in the place of every sinner. And at the center of this obedience is faith in God's promises. Jesus put himself in the place of one who relies on God's promises. He put himself in the place of one who depends on God's help. He trusts in God.

This is truly remarkable. He is God. Yet, he trusts in God. He trusts in God so that our trust would not be in vain. First he relies on God's promise so that our faith may rest on the firm foundation that God will hear and deliver us. As Jesus rode into Jerusalem, he was meek and humble. He was not showing his full divine splendor for all to see. Instead, he was relying on his Father to glorify him with the glory he has always shared with him and none other. So the eternal Son, in humility, would pray (Ps 73:21-24): "Thus my heart was grieved, and I was vexed in my mind. I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You. Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand. You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." Through the foolishness of his cross, the humble Lord Jesus relies on the Father to receive him to glory, the very glory he already has for himself. And this shows that he didn't do it for himself if it was already his. He did it for the sake of unworthy sinners so that we can pray the same thing with confidence. The heart that rests in this is a pure heart, because it relies on the counsel of God. By such faith we can have confidence that just as Christ was received into glory, so will those who trust in him.

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Thursday - Epistle (Philippians 2:5-11)

Read Philippians 2.

By pointing to Christ, St. Paul teaches what the Christian mind is. In doing so he not only teaches how we should behave among one another, but he also directs our minds to the only source of our salvation. By

looking at what Christ did to save us, we simultaneously learn from his example what God has created us to be in him. This shows that while our outward behavior is important (St. John says that we should love not only in talk, but in deed!), true sanctification happens when God, by the mercy of Christ, renews our minds (Rom 12:1-2), training us to confess the truth in fear and trembling. After all, John does not admonish us to love in deed only, but in deed and in truth (1 John 3:18). It is when our minds are conformed and renewed by the truth that our outward fruits are shown. It is only when Christ conforms our minds to what he did to save us that we are truly transformed. And how does this play out in our bodies and outward behavior? It happens through suffering, by resisting the conformity of this world, fighting against your own sinful lusts, and in this way presenting your bodies as living sacrifices holy and acceptable before God. Yet we don't find such holiness and favor in our own outward behavior or inward disciplines, lest we become smug and our minds lose the truth of God's love. We find such favor, holiness, and meekness in Christ who has given it all to us and thereby trains our minds in it. Therefore, be mindful of what is yours in Christ Jesus.

Christ, having all divine powers from eternity, emptied himself, not fully using his majesty. Having every right to all things as God's Son, he was obedient unto death in order to save us poor sinners. And as surely as God has highly exalted him and given him the name above every name, so does his obedience avail before God as our righteousness. Now since this is yours through faith created in you by God's Word, you therefore possess all things. All the while, God continues to work in you, renewing your mind to be conformed to Christ. Even as he fully credits such meek obedience to you, he now trains you in it, so that battling your sin, you learn in trembling to fear the God of your salvation.

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Friday - Verse (Psalm 22:1, 4, 5)

Read Psalm 22 again.

The *Alleluia* disappears during Lent, and we are left only with the *verse*. At first, the verses are still joyful even though the *Alleluia* is excluded. We sing of God's protection under the shelter of his wings (Ps. 91), a song of thanksgiving to God for his enduring mercy (Ps. 106), a hopeful prayer to God for mercy (Ps. 123), a confident confession of God's protection of his church (Ps. 125), and God's protection of his faithful against the ungodly as he scatters them (Ps. 129). Each of these *verses* has an *Alleluia* hidden behind it, confessing the promise of God to uphold his people and defend them. But now, on Palm Sunday, the

beginning of Holy Week, it is very difficult to find any hint of joy or Alleluia. Here we sing the beginning of Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" These are the words of our Lord from the cross, written by David under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They seem like words of utter despair. And yet, these words are in fact the source of our Alleluias. When this song of the church returns on Easter Sunday, it has returned because of the truth of these words uttered by our Lord.

Jesus was forsaken by God. He bore in his body the fullness of God's anger against sin. But he doesn't despair. He who despairs of God either curses or forgets about God. Jesus cries out to God in perfect obedience, honesty, and purity. He asks, "Why are you so far from helping me, and from the words of my groaning?" He says this not to a distant god of chance, but to "my God." He still claims him in true faith, bringing his complaints to him. He recalls God's faithfulness to deliver the fathers who trusted in him. Those who despair of God cannot remember his goodness and mercy. They only hold a grudge, remembering bad things. God never helped us, they say. But Jesus remembers God's mercy even as he complains to him. This obedience is beyond our understanding, because we can't fathom complaining so bitterly without sin. Yet, Jesus did. He did so on behalf of every sinner. As he teaches us to bring all of our cares to God, his complaint remains the source of our Alleluia.

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Saturday - Gospel (Matthew 21:1-9)

Read one or more of the passion narratives (Matt 26-27; Mark 14-15; Luke 22-23; John 18-19).

This is the second time during the church year that we have Matthew 21:1-9 as the Gospel lesson. The first time is the first day of the church year, Advent 1. So what is the difference? Well, in Advent, we meditate upon receiving our Lord Jesus with true faith. We focus on the fact that he comes as our King by ruling our hearts and minds with his Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17; Col 3:15).

By ruling our hearts and minds, our Lord unites himself to us in a mysterious union in which we live in him and he lives in us. St. Paul compares it to the marriage bond between a husband and a wife (Eph 5). Jesus lives within us so that we are members of his own body. Because of the profound mystery of this union, we call it the *mystical union*. That was the focus of this Gospel lesson back in Advent: the King coming to rule our hearts and minds. But now we focus on how Jesus became our

King. Today, we focus on the reason why Jesus road into Jerusalem some 2,000 years ago. He certainly came and still comes to rule within us. But before he could do that, he would need to claim his crown as King by giving his life into death for our sins.

Though he was greeted with shouts of praise and worship as he entered Jerusalem, he would claim his right as King by wearing a crown of thorns, bearing the reproach of the people, and carrying our sins to the cross. It is there where he became our King by taking on our bondage. It is there where he became our righteousness by taking on our sin. And it is there where he became our salvation by bearing the condemnation in our place. It is because of this that we enjoy the reign of our Lord who rules our hearts and minds, giving us a clear conscience before God. So this week, I encourage you all to meditate upon the passion and death of our Lord. Read Matthew 26-27. Sing our Hymn of the Day at home, "A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth." And take comfort in the forgiveness, which you enjoy from your King.

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A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth

Is. 53: 7

Ein Lämmlein geht

Paul Gerhardt, 1613, cento

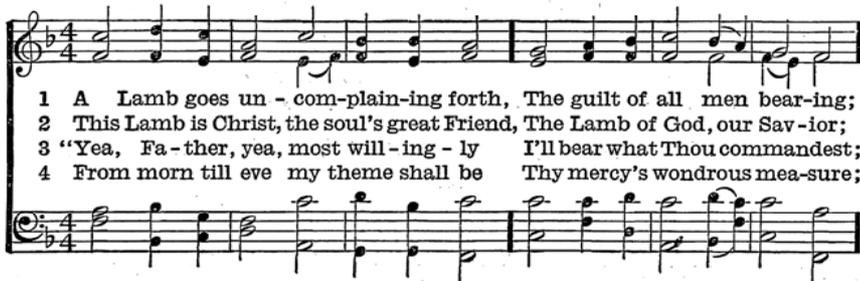
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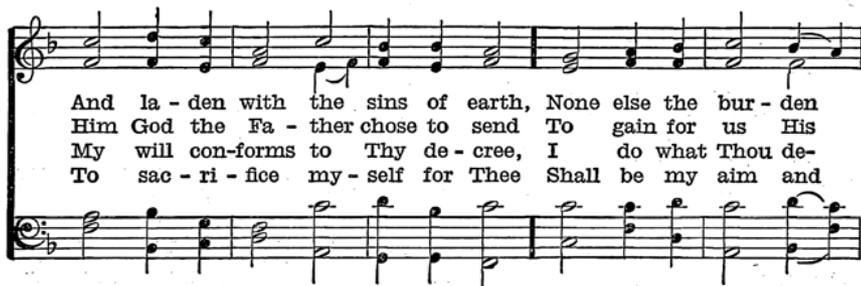
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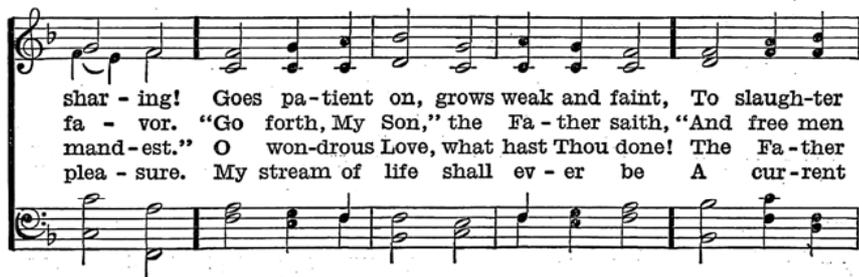
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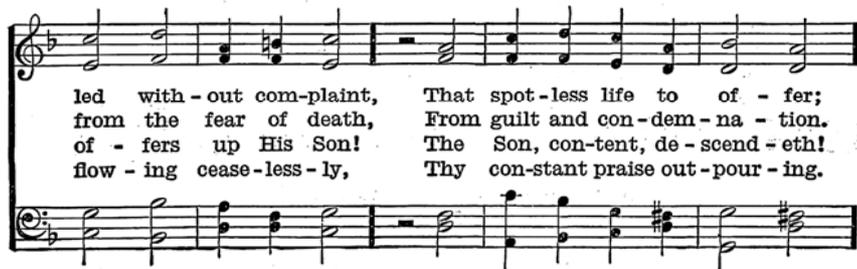
1 A Lamb goes un - com-plain-ing forth, The guilt of all men bear-ing;
 2 This Lamb is Christ, the soul's great Friend, The Lamb of God, our Sav-ior;
 3 "Yea, Fa - ther, yea, most will - ing - ly I'll bear what Thou commandest;
 4 From morn till eve my theme shall be Thy mercy's wondrous mea - sure;



And la - den with the sins of earth, None else the bur - den
 Him God the Fa - ther chose to send To gain for us His
 My will con-forms to Thy de - cree, I do what Thou de -
 To sac - ri - fice my - self for Thee Shall be my aim and



shar - ing! Goes pa - tient on, grows weak and faint, To slaugh - ter
 fa - vor. "Go forth, My Son," the Fa - ther saith, "And free men
 mand - est." O won - drous Love, what hast Thou done! The Fa - ther
 plea - sure. My stream of life shall ev - er be A cur - rent



led with - out com - plaint, That spot - less life to of - fer;
 from the fear of death, From guilt and con - dem - na - tion.
 of - fers up His Son! The Son, con - tent, de - scend - eth!
 flow - ing cease - less - ly, Thy con - stant praise out - pour - ing.

A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth



Bears shame, and stripes, and wounds and death, An-guish and mock-er-
 The wrath and stripes are hard to bear, But by Thy Pas-sion
 O Love, how strong Thou art to save! Thou bed-dest Him with-
 I'll trea-sure in my mem-o-ry, O Lord, all Thou hast



y, and saith, "Will-ing all this I suf-fer."
 men shall share The fruit of Thy sal-va-tion."
 in the grave Whose word the mountains rend-eth.
 done for me, Thy gra-cious love a-dor-ing. A-men.



5 Of death I am no more afraid,
 New life from Thee is flowing;
 Thy cross affords me cooling shade
 When noonday's sun is glowing.
 When by my grief I am opprest,
 On Thee my weary soul shall rest
 Serenely as on pillows.
 Thou art my Anchor when by woe
 My bark is driven to and fro
 On trouble's surging billows.

6 And when Thy glory I shall see
 And taste Thy kingdom's pleasure,
 Thy blood my royal robe shall be,
 My joy beyond all measure;
 When I appear before Thy throne,
 Thy righteousness shall be my crown,—
 With these I need not hide me.
 And there, in garments richly wrought
 As Thine own bride, I shall be brought,
 To stand in joy beside Thee.