

April 4, 2020 ~Praying in Preparation for Palm Sunday~

Father God, because you are omniscient, you know what your children were thinking when we woke this morning under orders to remain sheltered in place. So many of us began the day as we have the last few weeks with anxious hope for lower numbers from hospitals across our nations and around the world. Surely, all knowing Lord, you felt our aching hearts when numbers were higher, much higher.

You also sensed our sadness when we realized that this Saturday, the day before Palm Sunday, the anxious hope in us was related to a pandemic of suffering and death; not in hopeful anticipation of being in our church, waving palms and palm crosses as we processed into our sanctuary to worship you and our Lord Jesus. So many of us knew that tomorrow would be the first Palm Sunday in all our memories of Holy Week's beginning when we wouldn't be going to join our church family in our church to celebrate Jesus's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Our hearts are hurting, but your provisions assure us that Palm Sunday is coming, and we will worship you together in our homes as a church family using the technology developed by minds you filled with knowledge. How grateful we are for that provision!

'Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!
Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!
See, your king comes to you,
righteous and victorious,
lowly and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'" Zechariah 9:9

According to your perfect plan and a prophecy hundreds of years before it was fulfilled, you revealed to Zechariah where and how the king you'd be sending to all your people would come. Thank you, God, for the fulfillment of prophecy to children and adults in Jerusalem and to us. We are grateful for what we know about how and why kings processed long ago. A king was dressed royally, rode on the finest horse, and was accompanied by his strong army when he entered cities and towns in preparation for battle and conquest.

What a comforting image your true and holy word gives us! You, Lord Jesus, our Prince of Peace entered Jerusalem on a gentle donkey to defeat the strongest enemy of all mankind. Jesus went to pay our ransom for the consequences, not for his sins, but for ours. Fill our worship with rejoicing thanksgiving, and praise as we read scripture, sing hymns, share God's peace, and hear teaching that will lift us up out of the darkness of today and the troubling expectations of even more tragedy.

Almighty God, we cry out to you.

- Comfort and give patience and obedience to all sheltered in their homes.
- Protect and provide shelter and safe places for the homeless.
- Strengthen your caregivers and their suffering patients in hospital, clinics, and nursing facilities.
- Give clear direction for right treatment and guide the hands of all treating coronavirus victims, Lord.
- Give weakened immune systems your supernatural power to fight the virus in emergency rooms and intensive care units, and give those in critical care units your perfect peace as the end of their battle with this vicious, viral infection draws near.
- Protect the housekeepers, cooks, maintenance workers, medical technicians, pharmacists, chaplains, and administrators in all medical facilities you've provided for compassionate care from infection.
- Continue healing in all with milder infections and use their immune systems and stronger bodies to resist the virus.
- Protect families of all essential workers, and calm their fearful hearts.

Father God, your plans for us are known only to you. We trust you and lift up our prayers for all the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Use tomorrow to fill us with encouragement and hope. Hear our Hosannas, our singing, and our prayers. We love you Lord, but we know you love us even more.

Listen to the prayers of your people, lifted up in the name of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.