

PALM SUNDAY YEAR A



Painting by James Tissot (1936-1902)

PROCESSION OF THE PSALMS Matthew 21:1-11

The whole city was shaken and asked, “who is this?”

A very large crowd
before and
behind
cried
out with
“Hosanna to the Son of David,”

as they spread their cloaks
and strewed leaves from the palm trees,
preparing the way for the king to enter Jerusalem.

The city’s people were dazed
and they cried out.

*Who can this be,
this great one?*

Now we cry out too!
Who can this be?

We wave palms in welcome, but we ask,
Jesus of Nazareth, who are you to us?
Our God who walks alongside us?
A king, crowned with thorns?
A light that shows
our way to the truth?

PASSION Matthew 26:14–27, 66

And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him off to crucify him.

Sweet Jesus, you so
set your face like flint,
who beat you,
plucked your beard!

Did you ever
when you were struck?



loved the world that you
and gave your back to those
and your cheek to the ones who

shield yourself

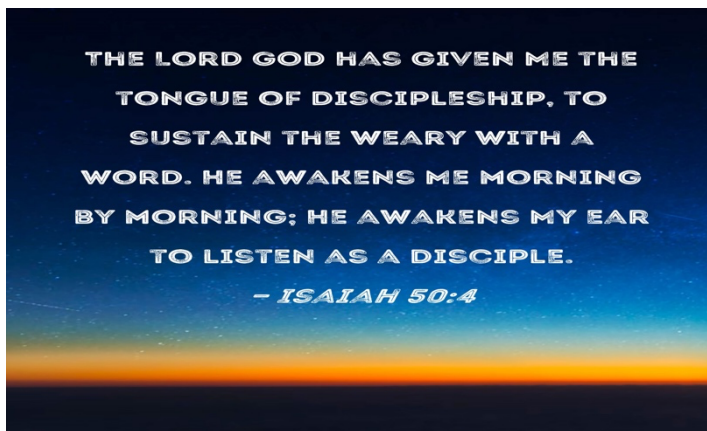
Instead, you humbled yourself and
emptied yourself out of love.

Let us be amazed by your love,
and share in it.

Let us say with the pagan centurion,

“Truly this man was
the Son of
God!”

THE FIRST READING Isaiah 50:4-7



THE LORD GOD HAS GIVEN ME THE
TONGUE OF DISCIPLESHIP. TO
SUSTAIN THE WEARY WITH A
WORD. HE AWAKENS ME MORNING
BY MORNING: HE AWAKENS MY EAR
TO LISTEN AS A DISCIPLE.
- ISAIAH 50:4

*He opens my ear that I may
hear.*

Sunrise to sunset, open our
eyes
that we may find you
in all things.

Let us too hear the cry of the
poor,

of the planet, of all in pain
from all injustice.
Let us speak on
their behalf.

Open
our hearts
that we may love you,
holding nothing back, nothing at all.

THE SECOND READING: Philippians 2:6-11

Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave

No self-concern,
no turning
away.

Christ,
teach us to love
in your way.

Filled with your Spirit,
let us surrender
into your
love. (Annie Osdieck)

REFLECTION Bearing Witness

The triumphant entry and the painful death make a great paradox. Through acclamation and through betrayal, God executes the plan of salvation; the exalted are brought low, and the humble are lifted up.

The King of heaven came to earth to die, and the king of both Israel and distant lands was shamed. Matthew is at pains to show us how those who should know better reject Jesus. Judas admits: "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." Jesus tells Caiaphas who he is. Pilate is warned by his wife's dream. And in the climax, Peter—who once called Jesus "the Messiah, the Son of the living God"—abandons him.

Against those who fail to bear witness, testimony for Jesus rises unexpectedly from the Temple, the created order, and the Gentile centurion. Jesus' prophecy to raise the destroyed Temple in three days is quoted twice. The Temple itself, rending its veil like a garment, bears witness to the coming Resurrection. The rocks of the lifeless creation, as Jesus predicted, "cry out" against his death. The righteous dead recognize him by whom they are set free. Recognizing these signs, the centurion, unlike Peter, is able to again call Jesus "Son of God."

These are the first tender shoots springing up from the grain of wheat, who willingly took the form of a slave and suffered even death on a cross. There is a rich harvest to come, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold. May we honor the one who died for our sake, and come at last to share in his heavenly kingdom. (Kimberly Hope Belcher)

