

April 13, 2025

Shouts of Praise!

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**Luke 19:28-40** *The Message*

<sup>28-31</sup> After saying these things, Jesus headed straight up to Jerusalem. When he got near Bethphage and Bethany at the mountain called Olives, he sent off two of the disciples with instructions: “Go to the village across from you. As soon as you enter, you’ll find a colt tethered, one that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it. If anyone says anything, asks, ‘What are you doing?’ say, ‘His Master needs him.’”

<sup>32-33</sup> The two left and found it just as he said. As they were untying the colt, its owners said, “What are you doing untying the colt?”

<sup>34</sup> They said, “His Master needs him.”

<sup>35-36</sup> They brought the colt to Jesus. Then, throwing their coats on its back, they helped Jesus get on. As he rode, the people gave him a grand welcome, throwing their coats on the street.

<sup>37-38</sup> Right at the crest, where Mount Olives begins its descent, the whole crowd of disciples burst into enthusiastic praise over all the mighty works they had witnessed:

Blessed is he who comes,  
the king in God’s name!

All’s well in heaven!

Glory in the high places!

<sup>39</sup> Some Pharisees from the crowd told him, “Teacher, get your disciples under control!”

<sup>40</sup> But he said, “If they kept quiet, the stones would do it for them, shouting praise.”

This is the Word of God for the people of God! Thanks be to God!

Over the past several weeks, we’ve been on a journey—  
a journey toward the cross of Jesus.

During this Lenten season, we’ve taken time to discover and embrace  
spiritual practices that slow us down & draw us closer to the Lord.

And now, as we enter the final week of Lent, we come to Palm Sunday—  
a day filled with excitement, joy, and worship.

Today, we step into the Gospel of Luke's story of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. What better day than today to be reminded that worship and praise are spiritual practices, too—powerful acts that not only draw us nearer to God, but also strengthen us for the challenges that lie ahead in this most holiest of weeks.

As we celebrate Palm Sunday, we are not just looking back at the crowds Who, bursting with enthusiastic praise—waved their palm branches, laid down their coats, and shouted “Hosanna,” ... but we're inviting that same excited spirit of worship & praise into our lives right now.

Because this, my friends, is the heart of worship—  
**praise that can't be contained,**  
a response to God's glory, goodness, and hope-filled possibility.

I invite us to not just see this as an ancient event...  
but as an invitation to engage in the spiritual disciplines of worship and praise that are meant to shape every part of our lives and our relationship with God.

So, let's start by understanding the true nature of worship.  
Worship is more than a song. It's more than a Sunday service.  
It's an act that permeates one's whole life.

Notice what the crowds are doing in verses 36-37.  
As Jesus enters Jerusalem, they lay their coats down, they shout praises,  
And they make a public declaration of who He is.

But this wasn't just a spontaneous event that happened one day.  
This was the culmination of the people's relationship with God.  
They had seen this man Jesus heal the sick, raise the dead,  
and do the miraculous.

They know from scripture & faith traditions that a King would be coming to save them from the tyranny of Roman rule!

The shouts of hosanna are the expectant cry,  
“Save us! Our triumphant King!

The crowds couldn't help but respond with so much passion & excitement.

Today we see that worship is first and foremost an acknowledgment of God's majesty.

Worship is not a performance or a routine.

It's a response of reverence to the awe-inspiring nature of who God is...  
and what God has done.

The people in Jerusalem were responding to the incredible things they had seen Jesus do and for the hope of what he could do.

Worship wasn't a mere habit; it was a necessary outpouring from the depth of their hearts.

Friends, you and I are invited to the same spiritual response & practice.

Worship isn't just about what happens here or online Sunday morning, but about how we live every single day as disciples of Jesus Christ.

- Every time you open your eyes to the beauty of God's creation;
- Every time you take a breath, a life-giving moment...  
That happens about 20 times a minute;
- Every time you express love and grace to someone,  
you & I are engaging in the act of worship...

Responses to the awe-inspiring nature of who God is...

And what the Lord has done....

And what the Spirit continues to do....

Oh worship isn't an event; it's a lifestyle.

Just as the crowds welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem,  
we are called to welcome Jesus into our hearts again & again  
with expectancy & gratitude,  
...lives fully open to God with hearts full of praise.

If you think about it, most other spiritual disciplines  
have a worship element to them like prayer, service, fasting,  
scripture, and devotions—  
ALL are ways of sharing our love and respect **to** God...  
and of being so filled with God's grace that it **overflows**  
into everything we do in our lives.

\*Worship is a **whole life** response that springs forth from our heart  
and soul... in reverence and awe of our Triune God.

In today's story we also see the power of PRAISE.

Friends, it's a powerful 1— 2 spiritual combo pack;  
Worship and praise go together like peanut butter and jelly,  
like Mickey and Minnie, like thunder and lightening.

Praise can be presented as an uninhibited, overflowing, joyful,  
and even boisterous recounting of the goodness of God.

When the crowd praised Jesus, it wasn't just about making noise.  
It was about declaring truth. For all the deeds of power they had seen,  
Declaring him the king who comes in the name of the Lord!

Praise has the power to shift our perspective, to lift our hearts.  
When we focus on who God is and what God has done & can do,  
it realigns our hearts with the Lord's will & with God's possibilities.

Just think about how powerful praise is. It can change the atmosphere.  
It can change us.

I don't know about you, but when I'm having a rough day,  
when I'm feeling drained or discouraged, there's something about  
lifting my voice in praise that changes my mindset.

It doesn't make all my problems go away, but it helps me refocus  
on the One who holds all things in His hands.

That's why music is such a powerful means of grace...

it helps us get our praise on!

From a full praise team band, to organ, choir and bells,  
praise moves us in mind- body- spirit!

I'm always moving whether I'm at the 9:00 AM or 11:00 AM service!

Both styles help me get my praise on!

I cannot help myself, music unleashes those unforced rhythms of grace  
that proclaim my praise to God.

But, notice how Jesus responds to the few uptight Pharisees in verse 40.

They tell Him to rebuke His disciples for praising Him so loudly,  
“Teacher, get your disciples under control!”

To which Jesus says, “I’m telling you...If they kept quiet,  
the stones would do it for them, shouting praise.”

Oh friends, that’s how powerful praise is.

If we don’t, creation itself will cry out in praise!

Just imagine that for a moment...

When we praise, we are participating in a cosmic declaration  
of God's glory and majesty.

Praise is transformative—

it elevates us, shifts our hearts and minds, moves our bodies,  
releases our spirits, and aligns us with God’s truth & power.

Finally, I want to talk about the communal nature of worship & praise.

In today’s story, it’s not just one person praising Jesus is it?

It’s a whole crowd of disciples, united in praise.

Worship is meant to be done together.

This is why we gather—because there’s something powerful  
when the church comes together, voices lifted as one.

There is strength in our collective praise.

You see, worship is not only about what it does for us individually,  
but what it does for us as a community.

This is part of FMC's vision of being *Relevant to the Community,*  
*Impacting Every Generation, & Embodying Radical Acceptance of All.*

Worship connects us to each other in profound ways.

It reminds us that we are not alone in our struggles or celebrations.

Together, we create space where **everyone**,  
no matter their background or life story,

**everyone** is welcomed into the presence of God. All Belong!

~This was why Trisha and Levi had Riley Grace baptized last Sunday,  
and we vowed with them to raise her up in Christ's love and hope...  
through all the ups & downs that will come throughout her life.

~This is why we are a reconciling community of faith who welcomes all  
no matter what.

~This is why people joined FMC and keep coming...  
they have found a place that helps them connect to God,  
and each other in profound ways.

~**All Belong**... because we know that in Christ we are one!

So we can unite our hearts and voices in praise and worship.

There is strength, power, and hope in our collective praise of a God  
who loved us so much, Jesus was sent to us, to be with us.

We worship & praise as a community  
because we know we need each other and we need God.

As we gather together on this Palm Sunday,  
we've witnessed the incredible power of worship and praise—  
both as a response to God's greatness and as a lifestyle  
that aligns our hearts with His.

Worship and praise are not just moments we experience on Sundays.  
They are the heartbeat of a vibrant, growing relationship with God,  
and they transform us from the inside out.

As we move into Holy Week, this is more crucial than ever.

Holy Week begins with the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem—  
a day filled with joy and celebration. But it doesn't end there.

As we walk with Jesus toward the cross,  
we face moments of sorrow, reflection, and challenge.

And that's why worship & praise are so important as spiritual practices.

They are not just for the high mountain top moments;  
they also carry us through the low valley moments,  
through the waiting, pain, & through the hardship life brings.

Praise and worship can anchor our souls  
in the midst of life's challenges and the crazy of life.

The crowds in Jerusalem celebrated Jesus' entry  
with loud shouts of praise, but as the week progressed,  
so many would abandon Him, or fall silent.

But we, as His followers, are called to continue the praise,  
no matter the season, no matter the circumstance.

Worship and praise are our lifeline,  
our way of staying connected to God and declaring His goodness,  
strength, and power...no matter what we face.

So 2 practical ways to engage these disciplines this week are:

First, find moments to spontaneously praise God.

Whether it's in the car on your way to work or school,  
or as you sit with family at the dinner table,  
or while taking a walk in nature,  
take a moment to lift your heart in gratitude.

Let your praise not be confined only to church or a specific time.  
Let it be something that bubbles up from within you spontaneously.  
Praise God for all good things, for the small victories,  
and even while in the midst of the struggles.

Second, Make Worship a Family Affair.

Worship is a communal experience, and this week, I encourage you  
to bring your family, invite your friends and neighbors,  
of all those you spend time with into these practices.

Whether it's reading scripture together, singing a song of praise,  
Attending one of the many amazing special services this week at FMC,  
or just discussing what God has been doing in your life,  
make worship a part of your tribe!

Friends, let us be a people who, like the crowds on Palm Sunday,  
shout our praise to God in both joy and sorrow.

Let us not be silent when the challenges come, but instead,  
let our hearts and lives overflow with worship.

Praise is our declaration of who God is,  
praise acknowledges the victory in Christ and the sacrifice of Christ...

We PRAISE AND WORSHIP our awesome God...

no matter the circumstances...

For the Lord is worthy of all of it.

Amen and amen.



## **SENDING WORDS:**

And now we lay down the palm branches.

And with them we lay down our belief

that there is another way for you to be God and King...

our Sacrificial Lamb who takes away the sins of the world,  
our Redeemer and Savior.

As the last echo of the final alleluia fades,

so does our hope that this journey can end  
in any other way.

The week stretches ahead

glory-less

and pain-full...and yet we worship and praise YOU.

Whether we walk with all faith or none

we look towards the cross,

knowing it is both the most human

and most divine

of all journeys

Friends travel the road with courage,

with love,

with praise on our lips

with worship on our hearts

For we travel with the uneasy peace that is the gift of faith  
into this holiest of weeks. Amen.