

“Hosanna”

Palm Sunday is a very special day of celebration because we remember Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem and the wonderful reception he received from the general population. The crowds were loudly praising God for the awesome things they had seen Jesus do and teach. They interpreted Jesus’ entry into the Holy City to be his self-declaration of being the promised Messianic Warrior King! The parallels to Luke’s account in Matthew and Mark reported the people shouted “Hosanna”, which literally was a cry for help – “Save Us!” But, by the time of Jesus’ entrance, it had become the expectation God was about to save the people and nation, so it was a declaration of praise, as if the people were saying God was saving them! Many, if not most, believed that meant he was raising an army, including angels, to destroy the Roman Empire and its army. That public expectation worried the Jewish and Roman authorities because of their fears that the joyous welcome of Jesus into Jerusalem might result in a revolution.

So, it should not surprise us that the Jewish religious authorities attempted to cool off the crowd. Remember, Luke reported in **verse 39**, *“Then some of the Pharisees in the crowd spoke to Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ they said, ‘command your disciples to be quiet!’”*

Of course, Jesus knew the Truth. He did not enter Jerusalem as the Messianic Warrior King. He came to reveal God’s Agape Love for all people – how our Divine Parent has forgiven us and invites us all to experience healing, purpose, the New Life in Christ, and the New Faith Relationship with God. Our Maker knows how stubborn we human beings are, so the Son of God – Jesus the Christ was sent to demonstrate the Almighty’s Agape Love for us through the Son’s suffering Death on the Cross and Resurrection from the Dead. How can we deny or reject such great Love from our God?

Therefore, the fulfillment of that great love was the Hosanna – the salvation given by God, which was being revealed during that Holy Week. Numerous places in the Scriptures include the testimony that God’s Work of Love was done in Jesus Christ, especially his death and resurrection and that activity was crucial to the Redemption – Reconciliation of the Whole Universe with God. It was with Jesus’ greater understanding of this that he responded to the demand of the Pharisees by saying in **verse 40**, *“I tell you that if they keep quiet, the stones themselves will start shouting.”*

Today is not just Palm Sunday but, also, Personal Dedication Sunday – the high point of our Personal Dedication Program! In line with our Personal Dedication Theme – “God is the Potter – I am the Clay”, we had a special presentation – testimony by potter Kathy Blossom last Sunday. She reminded us of how God molds us – brings us to fulfill our Divine Parent’s purpose for our lives – just as a potter gives purpose to a piece of pottery.

On this Palm and Personal Dedication Sunday, part of our Hosanna Celebration – the recognition of God’s Salvation for us is to be the persons of faith God has formed us to be. Our Creator has molded us with special gifts, abilities, talents, as well as, the not so glowing aspects of our identities. The following and somewhat humorous video reminds us of how each of us are clay jars, which are molded to perform important tasks for God’s Purposes. [The video, *“Turtle Shells and Clay Jars”*, was shown.]

Today, through our Personal Dedication Program and Process, each of us has the opportunity to join the Creation, the Palm Sunday Crowds, and other Sisters and Brothers in Christ in declaring God’s Agape Love and Salvation for us – the Forgiveness, Healing, Love, New Life, and New Faith Relationship with God and one another! We are not doing that just with our words of praise but also as we fulfill the purpose God has molded into each of us. Additionally, God does not just leave us clay pots or jars to fend for ourselves, as we seek to fulfill our Divine Parent’s purpose for each of us and our lives. God is always with us in the Holy Spirit to empower and guide us in our being the people God has molded us to be. Amen.

[The video, “*A Place for You to Serve*”, was shown.]

PERSONAL DEDICATION PROCESS

There is a place for you to serve! As we come to the high point of our Personal Dedication Program, you are invited to complete your Personal Dedication Booklet and then bring it forward to the Altar for Dedication and Consecration. If you don't have a Personal Dedication Booklet, please hold up your hand and I will get a copy to you. By completing our Personal Dedication Booklets and presenting them for Dedication, you and I make our New Lives in Christ and our commitment to be more fully the persons God has molded us to be a significant expression of God being the Potter and Us being the Clay. We commit to how we will use God's Spirit Guided Gifts in each of us as a manifestation of our deep Love for and Faith Relationship with God's Only Son, Jesus the Christ and with our Divine Parent – Our Potter.

Please look at your Personal Dedication Booklet. All of the ministries of Round Grove United Church need the commitment of time, skills, and energy. Please take each of those ministry opportunities seriously and place a check or X in the blank to the left of each opportunity for which you are willing to follow Jesus' example of self-giving and sacrificial service and love – manifesting how God has molded you for God's Purposes.

Please open your booklet to the first page of opportunities, which has the title, “High Priorities”. Our High Priorities at this time – our Critical needs are for volunteers to Teach the Preschool through Elementary Sunday School Class with Margaret Wells, to be a Substitute Teacher for that Class, to Prepare and Show the PowerPoint Presentations for our Worship Celebrations, to Work in the Kitchen for Fellowship Meals, to Serve Refreshments after our Worship Celebrations, to be a Youth Sponsor, and to be a Lay Liturgical Leader, who from time to time helps lead our Worship Celebrations. Our Potter God has molded you and me to respond to our Divine Parent's and Jesus' sacrificial love and example, by being instruments of agape love. As the stones themselves would have shouted, if the people had been quiet during Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem, so let us manifest God's Purposes for us in the ways we utilize our Spirit Given Gifts. Living this way, we grow more deeply in our New Faith Relationship with God and reveal the Suffering and Sacrificial Love of our Crucified and Risen Lord and our Divine Parent! Being so transformed – let us earnestly seek to manifest our Potter God's Purposes in and through us and our committed ways in which we utilize our Spirit Given Gifts!

As Michael shares some of his Time, Talent, and Energy for God's Purposes and our Worship Celebration, please complete your Personal Dedication Booklet, including the information on the front cover, and then, after I invite the ingathering, bring it forward to the Altar for Dedication and Consecration. Be the people God has Molded and Loved us to be through agape love as shown by our use of our God Given Gifts! Let God the Potter mold you and work through you to more completely use your Gifts of the Spirit for God's Purposes through Round Grove United Church, United Church of Christ. Amen.