

**Holy Week
2026**

**Sermons from
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Preached at Grace Church and St. Paul's

Palm Sunday: Hosanna! ¡Ayúdanos! Help us!

Maundy Thursday: The Mandate of Love Poured Out

Good Friday: Mother of the Beloved (A Homily given as part of the Seven Last Words)

The Great Vigil of Easter: Sing Now all the Round Earth!

The Feast of the Resurrection - Easter Sunday: Singing to Galilee

Palm Sunday: Hosanna! ¡Ayúdanos! Help us!

+Restore us, O God of hosts; *

show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved. Amen + (Psalm 80:3)

Hosanna! Hosanna! ¡Ayúdanos! Help us!

Holy God, we need your help again. Wars rage, people are hungry, and lonely, and living in fear and anxiety. Palm Sunday comes again, we raise our voices, we raise our hands, we raise our prayers. We need you! Please, we can't do this on our own.

This morning, we enter deeply into the Eucharistic Moment. Each time we Celebrate this Great Sacrament, we sing the words "Hosanna in the Highest. Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest." Each time we gather to Celebrate, our souls are transported to this great protest of hope, as Jesus humbly rides by on a borrowed donkey on his way into Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was so full of people, preparing for the Passover. Each year, during this extremely holy season, the streets were full. I imagine it was as hard to find a room during this time as it was when Mary rode a borrowed donkey into Bethlehem. During this season, there would also be a grand procession of the Roman Authorities coming in through the opposite gate of the city. Governor Pilate would hold a puppet court each year where one prisoner would be released to help ease the tension, to avoid an uprising, flexing imperial authority. But Jesus came in greater glory, listening to the people, walking among them, as Philippians tells us "Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a

cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name..." (Philippians 2:6-9)

There is no king except the King who reigns from the Tree, the King of Creation who knows that Love is the greatest power - patient, and kind, and longsuffering, and unrelenting. Not even the power of Rome, not even the power of Death, can quiet this Love Divine, all Loves Excelling, so we enter into the Great Eucharistic Moment. Our lives are joined together with those who first shouted Hosanna! Our lives are joined with those who cry ayúdanos! Our lives are joined with all those who cry help us!

Year after year, Holy Week comes to reconnect us, to reroot us, to remind us, as we sanctify the passage of time until we no longer need to cry Hosanna, ayúdanos, help us. But while we are here, let us be like those two disciples who went to find the donkey, let us bring all that we have, the broken pieces of our lives, the glorious pieces of our lives, the pieces of our lives that are crying for help, the pieces of our lives that can offer help. The Lord needs them. The Lord needs us. We need God's help. Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna!

Amen.

Maundy Thursday: The Mandate of Love Poured Out

+What wondrous love is this, o my soul, o my soul, what wondrous love is this, o my soul. Amen+

“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us.” 1 John 4:7-12

These words come from the First Letter of John - the same John that is widely believed to be the author of the Gospel, the Beloved Disciple, the one who stayed close to the Cross with Mary when the other disciples ran away on that terrible good Friday.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke each tell us of the greatest commandment “Love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself” but John takes this sacred central thread of Jewish tradition and spends the rest of his life trying to understand and share what it has meant for him and his community in light of the Incarnation of Jesus.

John has always had his eyes on Jesus in a slightly different way than the other three Gospel writers. On this night, Matthew, Mark, and Luke focus on the Institution of the Eucharist, each giving a few paragraphs on how Jesus took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it - a sacred moment we enter into each time

we gather to celebrate the Eucharist. But John doesn't focus on the Words of Institution. The Gospel we just heard tonight is part of a much larger dinner conversation where Jesus teaches, and prays, and serves for 5 whole chapters!

I give thanks to God that we have the other three accounts of the Eucharistic moment, and I give thanks to God because we have John's account of how that moment causes us to live different lives - lives that take that first and greatest commandment - "Love God and Love your neighbor as yourself" - commanded to live more deeply into it - "Love one another as I have loved you".

Something changed for John that night, something in his heart was strengthened so that he could stay with Mary as she watched her baby boy suffer. Even from the Cross, Jesus saw the self-sacrificial love and gave Mary and John to each other as an adoptive family. It wasn't just a theological ideal for them, it was the fruit of that holy night, the Eucharistic Love that causes us to reach out our hands, both to give, and to receive. This love is reciprocal. I imagine that John's writings have this particular and strong focus on Love because of the special relationship that John had with Mother Mary, who Loved Jesus first and fiercest, and her love for us echoes in John's writings, as Jesus' love commands us to love one another.

May this strength of belovedness help us to love and be loved. At this time, I would like to invite you into a practice that we shared at the Clergy Renewal of Vows this past Tuesday. 40 days ago, I stood here and we rubbed ashes on each other's foreheads with the reminder of our own mortality. That is true, but it is only half of the story. Death will come, but our hope is that this Love we proclaim tonight is stronger than death. With the Chrism of Baptism, may we be reminded that Love is stronger than Death, and unto that Love we have returned. Please come forward to be anointed as we remember this new commandment to love

one another as Jesus has loved us. (Remember that Love is stronger than Death and unto that Love you have returned.)

Amen.

Good Friday: Mother of the Beloved

“Woman, behold your son. Behold your mother.”

*A Homily given as part of the Seven Last Words
offered at St. Paul's in Stockbridge*

+May it be unto me according to thy word. Amen+

How often did Mary ponder these words? As her baby boy kicked as she rode that stoney road on the back of a donkey? As she cleaned spit up off of her veil? As Joseph taught little Jesus how to carve wood and fashion nails to help repair their home? As she encouraged him to keep the wedding party going with the first miracle of water turned into wine? When he ran into the wilderness for 40 long days? As he asked, "Who are my mother, and my brothers and my sisters?"? As he got in trouble with the authorities again, and again? As he wept, like he did when he was a little boy, wrapping his arms around her protective arm? As she realized there was nothing more she could do to protect her little boy from a world that only wanted to hurt him?

May it be unto me according to your word.

In the Temple when she presented a sacrifice of two pigeons, giving thanks to God for her first born son, the Old Simeon gave her a blessing and a warning - "a sword will pierce your own heart too". Were these words swirling around her breaking heart as she watched a spear pierce the heart she spent her whole life protecting with her garment of fierce motherly love?

Knowing that time was short, Jesus looked with complete compassion - full co-suffering - on his Mother and on the Beloved Disciple. Knowing both of their hearts, he knew that they could carry each other through that hour, through the

days to come. So he gave us to each other, a new kind of family, bound together by Love Divine.

Sometimes the only comfort we can offer is to stand silently beside, being a shoulder to cry on, a hand to hold, being vulnerable enough to reach out when our own strength fails.

In total desolation, as all seems lost, as the one we love hovers between life and death, Our Mother stands, ready to embrace us as her own, because her heart has known both desolation and the consolation that is to come.

Remember, O Most Gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired by thy confidence, I fly to thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy, hear and answer me.

Pour forth your grace into our hearts, O Lord, that we who have known the Incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ, announced by an angel to the Virgin Mary, may by his Cross and Passion be brought to the glory of his Resurrection, through the same, Jesus Christ our Lord.

May we stand side by side, leaning on each other, as Mary and the Beloved Disciple stood, a new family, bound together by the Crucified yet Living One.

Amen.

**The Great Vigil of Easter:
Sing Now all the Round Earth!**

The Exultet

(Book of Common Prayer 286-287)

*“Rejoice now, heavenly hosts and choirs of angels,
and let your trumpets shout Salvation
for the victory of our mighty King.*

*Rejoice and sing now, all the round earth,
bright with a glorious splendor,
for darkness has been vanquished by our eternal King.*

*Rejoice and be glad now, Mother Church,
and let your holy courts, in radiant light,
resound with the praises of your people.*

*All you who stand near this marvelous and holy flame,
pray with me to God the Almighty
for the grace to sing the worthy praise of this great light;
through Jesus Christ his Son our Lord,
who lives and reigns with him,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

*It is truly right and good, always and everywhere, with our
whole heart and mind and voice, to praise you, the invisible,
almighty, and eternal God, and your only-begotten Son,*

Jesus Christ our Lord; for he is the true Paschal Lamb, who at the feast of the Passover paid for us the debt of Adam's sin, and by his blood delivered your faithful people.

This is the night, when you brought our fathers, the children of Israel, out of bondage in Egypt, and led them through the Red Sea on dry land.

This is the night, when all who believe in Christ are delivered from the gloom of sin, and are restored to grace and holiness of life.

This is the night, when Christ broke the bonds of death and hell, and rose victorious from the grave.

How wonderful and beyond our knowing, O God, is your mercy and loving-kindness to us, that to redeem a slave, you gave a Son.

How holy is this night, when wickedness is put to flight, and sin is washed away. It restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to those who mourn. It casts out pride and hatred, and brings peace and concord.

How blessed is this night, when earth and heaven are joined and man is reconciled to God.

Holy Father, accept our evening sacrifice, the offering of this candle in your honor. May it shine continually to drive away all darkness. May Christ, the Morning Star who knows no setting, find it ever burning--he who gives his light to all creation, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen."

+Pray with me to God the Almighty, for the Grace to sing the worthy praise of this great light.
Amen+

What a strange and beautiful thing we do this night. After long hours, and long days, at the end of a very long and very Holy Week, we gather together to sing the worthy praise of this great light, the Light that shines even in the most awful nights, when Creation itself holds its breath. After Brother Sun and Sister Moon stood still, in awe and wonder that the Lord of Creation poured out Living Water from his Heart, we stood in the glow of Brother Fire, and Sister Water just helped us sing out the Gloria again after a long absence.

I'm almost at a loss for words - what more could I say that hasn't already been sung. I'm so thankful that my brother Sam is going to be singing the next great prayer, so that I can sneak a quick breath, as breath is restored to the Church again.

This is the night when we stand in awe of the New Creation - Resurrected Life. We have passed through betrayal, and sorrow, and suffering, and death, and waiting. Last night we gathered around the Cross and we sang "Were You There" with that haunting refrain - "oh sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble, were you there when they Crucified my Lord?". My heart trembled in sadness last night at the foot of the Tree of Life. This morning we sat by the tomb, as an Ancient Homily for Holy Saturday reminded us :

"Something strange is happening—there is a great silence on earth today, a great silence and stillness. The whole earth keeps silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and he has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. God has died in the flesh and hell trembles with fear.

He has gone to search for our first parent, as for a lost sheep. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, he has gone to free from sorrow the captives Adam and Eve, he who is both God and the son of Eve. The Lord approached them bearing the cross, the weapon that had won him the victory. At the sight of him Adam, the first man he had created, struck his breast in terror and cried out to everyone: "My Lord be with you all." Christ answered him: "And with your spirit." He took him by the hand and raised him up, saying: "Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

Let us sing the worthy praise of this great light.

And tonight, if I'm being completely honest, my heart was trembling more than it was last night. Tonight, my heart trembles at the tomb, cracked open, and empty, as an angel says "he is not here; for he has been raised". All you who stand near this marvelous and holy flame, pray with me to God the Almighty for the grace to sing the worthy praise of this great light.

But who am I that I have the audacious privilege to tell a choir of angels to rejoice? Who am I that I get to remind Earth to sing forth new flowers to brighten the way for the Great Gardener who walks on ahead of us? Who am I that I can tell Mother Church herself to be glad?

This isn't my song alone - the songs we sing tonight are your songs. You who have been bound together into the Paschal Mystery - you who have been down to the depths of sorrow and suffering, you who have been lifted up out of the deep waters, you who have a Good Shepherd to lead you through the valley of the shadow of death, this is your song to sing out.

Since around the 5th century, this great hymn has been sung out as the faithful gather in Vigil to hear again the story of God's hand at work throughout Creation and Salvation History. It radiates through time, a golden thread that holds back sin, and gloom, and sadness, and death, and hell, reminding us that Christ broke them. Death did come, but Christ is Victorious. So we give a sacrifice of thanksgiving in the form of sung prayer.

This act of thanksgiving and adoration is not just limited to this one holy song on this one holy night though. Throughout the world, the Church sings and speaks the songs of Salvation History, of New Creation, every morning and every evening, through wars, and peacetime, through famine, drought, and disaster, through seedtime and abundant harvest. We sing on. We sing on because the hope and power of this night cannot be contained. Even if our lips were silent, the sprouting seeds, the new leaves, the unexpected wayside flower, each creeping thing and winged bird would sing out that death is conquered and that we are free. If you don't feel this hope yet, let the Church sing for you, let the rhythms of Daily Prayer carry you, let the light sing at open and close of day.

May the Light of Christ shine continually in your heart to drive away all darkness. May Christ, the Morning Star who knows no setting, find it ever burning - even when this candle goes out, even when the angel departs, even as you walk back to the daily work of finding Galilee. Christ will meet you there and sing you home.

Amen.

The Feast of the Resurrection - Easter Sunday: Singing to Galilee

+Risen Lord, be known to us this day, and walk on ahead of us. Amen+

Early in the morning, before sunrise, before the birds sing their morning prayer, the women go to finish the holy work of the burial rite. Mary Magdalen and her friend Mary gather what they need to faithfully finish the work they thought was theirs to do. They gathered in silence, preparing for one final visit to their beloved Teacher and Friend, so they could close the book that wasn't quite finished.

The experience of the past week left them exhausted and heartbroken, but they remained faithful to the task at hand because of their love for the one who had changed their lives. Grief and love mingled together.

As they got closer they heard the sounds of soldiers keeping watch. How on earth would they be able to complete their sacred work? And then suddenly, God made a way out of no way, as God so often does.

Grief and love quickly turned into love and fear as thunder and lightning shook - like a sudden summer storm in the Garden. The soldiers that Mary and Mary were worried about either ran away or fainted in fear as light, the Light that shines in the darkness at the beginning of time, broke the stone that stood in their way. As they got even closer, they saw something awful - the body they came to anoint was not there and a stranger told them that he was no longer dead but that he was on his way back home.

They ran full of terrified joy to tell the others who were hiding in fear, and then they stopped dead in their tracks, well... I guess they actually stopped alive

in their tracks. Jesus stood there with the scars of his love, embraced them, and told them that he would meet them again on the way back to where it all began.

New Life begins right where old life ends.

Galilee is everywhere - your home, Gideon's Garden, Lee Pantry, Berkshire South Community Center, The Southern Berkshires, New York, Texas, Holyoke, Worcester, everywhere we could go, God has gone ahead of us. Galilee is where Jesus called the first Disciples, Galilee is that place of unexpected encounter with the Holy Other. We're given this message twice - first from the messenger, and then from the One who sent the messenger. The Gospel text this morning says fear twice, and each time fear comes in, a promise of presence comes to ease the fear. Fear and grief, fear and joy, fear and the promise that God will make a way out of no way.

The power of death was broken, the power of fear couldn't hold Jesus down or hold the women back. Those who use the power of fear and the threat of death will be cast down, just as Mother Mary sings in her Magnificat. The power of life and the promise of Resurrected Life cannot be stopped.

There's a hymn that we'll sing in a few minutes that I pray you can sing on your way to Galilee, or whenever your heart is afraid, may it be the comforting hand of the Good Shepherd leading you through those things that may be a large stone blocking the way - Now the Green Blade Riseth.

*“Now the green blade riseth from the buried grain,
wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.*

*In the grave they laid him, Love by hatred slain,
thinking that never he would wake again,
laid in the earth, like grain that sleeps unseen:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.*

*Forth He came at Easter, like the risen grain,
He that for three days in the grave had lain;
Quick from the dead my Risen Lord is seen:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.*

*When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
Thy touch can call us back to life again,
fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.”*

Amen.