

Rethinking Religion



RETHINKING REAL STRENGTH

Palm Sunday

BETHEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH | York, Nebraska

March 24, 2024

SERIES THEME: RETHINKING RELIGION

Everyone has assumptions about God. Likewise, everyone has assumptions about religion. Increasingly, those assumptions are negative. Americans are walking away from Christianity in breathtaking numbers. It raises the question. How do those people know if their assumptions about religion are correct? Do they really understand Christianity at all? Do we? Do we truly understand this religion? In the season of Lent, as much as any other, Jesus teaches things that turns the world's assumptions about religion completely upside down. We call it "Christianity." So, in this holy season, let us go straight to Christ and let him replace assumptions with truth. Jesus, help us to rethink religion!

THEME OF THE DAY: RETHINKING REAL STRENGTH

Most religions believe in a powerful God. It is assumed that God will use that strength for the benefit of his followers. That is a reasonable assumption, but it begs the question. What is real strength? It is easy to assume that real strength means exerting your will over another by using any means necessary, including force. But this week we see Jesus Christ demonstrate a different kind of strength. We have come to Holy Week. It begins with Jesus humbly riding a donkey colt straight into the hands of his enemies. As the week progresses, it will appear that Christ's adversaries are the ones in a position of power and Jesus is in a position of weakness. Yet what Christ does this holy week—setting his divine strength aside, being passive in the face of death—would change the world. To do what Christ did for us and our salvation took real strength.

Worship Leader
Organist/Pianist

Pastor Justin Wilkens
Timothy Richert

Acknowledgments

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The Service, Setting One (page 154 in Christian Worship 21)

Hymn: 542 To My Precious Lord

Stand

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Confession

CW 154

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

**If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just
and will forgive us our sins
and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

Holy God, gracious Father,

I am sinful by nature

and have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions.

I have not loved you with my whole heart;

I have not loved others as I should.

I deserve your punishment both now and forever.

But Jesus, my Savior, paid for my sins

with his innocent suffering and death.

Trusting in him, I pray: God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Silence for meditation and reflection

Our gracious Father in heaven has been merciful to us. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Lord, Have Mercy

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

THE WORD

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

We praise you, O God, for the great acts of love by which you have redeemed us through your Son, Jesus Christ. As he was acclaimed by those who scattered their garments and branches of palms in his path, so may we always hail him as our King and follow him with perfect confidence; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Be seated

First Reading

Zechariah 9:9–12

The prophet Zechariah foretold a king who is both infinitely strong and perfectly humble. He would enter Jerusalem riding on the colt of a donkey.

The Coming of Zion's King

⁹ Rejoice greatly, Daughter of Zion!

Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem!

Look! Your King is coming to you.

He is righteous and brings salvation.

He is humble and is riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the horse from Jerusalem.

The battle bow will be taken away,
and he will proclaim peace to the nations.

His kingdom will extend from sea to sea,
from the River to the ends of the earth.

¹¹ As for you,

because of the blood of my covenant with you,

I will release your prisoners from the waterless pit.

¹² Return to the stronghold, you prisoners who have hope.

This very day I declare that I will restore double to you.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm of the Day: 24-In front of hymnal: Welcome the King of Glory

Second Reading

Hebrews 12:1–3

Jesus demonstrated strength by enduring the cross. He did so for the joy set before him: redeeming us from our sin.

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us get rid of every burden and the sin that so easily ensnares us, and let us run with patient endurance the race that is laid out for us. ² Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who is the author of our faith and the one who brings it to its goal. In view of the joy set before him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of God's throne. ³ Carefully consider him who

endured such hostility against himself from sinful people, so that you do not grow weary and lose heart.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Stand

Gospel Acclamation

John 12:23



Refrain



Glo - ry, praise, and hon - or to you, Lord Je - sus Christ.

Tone



Refrain

The hour has come, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glo - ri - fied.

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Gospel

Mark 11:1–10

The almighty Son of God demonstrates real strength by humbly riding into Jerusalem knowing he will soon be put to death.

Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

¹ As they approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, on the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ² and told them, "Go into the village ahead of you. As soon as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it, and he will send it back here without delay.'" ⁴ They left and found a colt on the street, tied at a door; and they untied it. ⁵ Some who were standing there asked them, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" ⁶ The disciples answered them just as Jesus had instructed them, and the men let them go.

⁷ They brought the colt to Jesus, threw their garments on it, and Jesus sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their garments on the road. Others spread branches that they had cut from the fields. ⁹ Those who went in front and those who followed were crying out, Hosanna!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!
Hosanna in the highest!

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

Be seated

Hymn of the Day: 411 Ride On, Ride On in Majesty

Sermon

Stand

Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

He descended into hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,**

**the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Be seated

Prayer of the Church

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Brief silence

For the Holy Church as she embarks on the holiest week of the Church Year, that she would rejoice greatly over her King, who saved her with His perfect life and sacrificial death, and who comes to her humbly via His Holy Word and Sacraments, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For our Christian lives, that we would be granted faithfulness in times of temptation, repentance and forgiveness when we fall, love for all our brothers and sisters in Christ, reconciliation with those from whom we are alienated, and boldness to confess the faith we have in Christ, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For the members of this congregation, that we would be given faithful and generous hearts to prayerfully and financially support the mission and ministry of our Lord in this place and abroad, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For all whom our Father has given authority in civil governments, that He would guide their decisions and desires so that life is defended, justice upheld and the will of Him before whom all knees will bow is done, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For those who live without faith in Christ, that the Holy Spirit would call them to repentance and give them the gift of faith to believe in the One who comes in the name of the Lord, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For those stricken by disease; for those enduring famine and natural disasters; for those in bondage; and for those who are sick, shut-in, recovering or have any need, *[especially for those who have requested our prayers, including _____,]* that our heavenly Father would hear their pleas, meet their needs, relieve their suffering and lead them to rejoice in Him who never fails us in our time of need, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For those who have departed this vale of tears in faith and now sleep in Jesus, let us give thanks to the Lord; that He would shepherd us in that same faith until our last hour, bringing us, with them, into His Kingdom, which has no end, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

Offering

Offering Hymn: 429 O Sacred Head, Now Wounded

sts. 1, 7

Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

Almighty God, we thank you for teaching us the things you want us to believe and do. Help us by your Holy Spirit to keep your Word in pure hearts that we may be strengthened in faith, guided in holiness, and comforted in life and in death, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and + give you peace.

Amen.

Hymn: 432 O Dearest Jesus, What Law Have You Broken

sts. 1–2, 5–7

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today: 9:30 AM Bible Study and Sunday School, 10:30 AM Worship

Maundy Thursday: 6:30 PM Worship at Grace (Communion)

Good Friday: 6:30 PM Worship at Bethel (Communion)

Easter Sunday: 10:30 AM Worship

Flowers

If you would like to bring flowers for our Easter Sunday service please have them at church by Good Friday.

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Personal assisted listening devices are available.

Given to the Lord: Attendance: Worship 58, Offerings: Operating: Needed 2,854.90, Given \$1,470.25. **To God be the glory!**

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