

## Public Faith

On this Palm Sunday in 2026, we locate ourselves approximately 2,000 years into the legacy of the Jesus movement, which was a rallying call to resist tyranny and oppression through unwavering love. Have all who have, through the ages, professed faith in the way of Jesus and claimed the name Christian lived in ways that responded affirmatively to Jesus' call to resist evil, to center those on the margins of society, to love our neighbor as ourself? No, we have not consistently all done that.

The confluence of thousands of No Kings 3 rallies across our nation and world yesterday and the start of Holy Week across our faith tradition today invites us to wonder about this oft-quoted question from deceased American author Spencer Johnson: What would you do if you weren't afraid? I ask it of us in this way: How will you publicly demonstrate your Christian faith (that is, steady love for God, self and other) if fear cannot overpower the courage of your conviction?

With our eyes open or closed, let's be together in a moment of prayer. Holy Loving Spirit, we are grateful for freedom to gather today – on our live stream and on this land – loved by First Nations and others across time and where we are now weaving our way of community. Lead us from gratitude into wonder. Help us to imagine ourselves living at our most courageous. We pray this in the name of our great teacher, Jesus. Amen.

Let's move into pondering our contemporary Palm Sunday moment with brief, dense words that I'll offer and then unpack from Presbyterian minister, Rev. Dr. Mark Sandlin. He has a strong social media presence and I find that he articulates the meaning of this day more effectively than I have ever before seen it described. Sandlin has written this: *"Palm Sunday wasn't a parade. It was a protest. There were two processions entering Jerusalem. One from the empire. One from the people. Jesus entered on a humble donkey.*

*The empire entered with horses and chariots. 'Hosanna' didn't mean 'Yay.' It meant: Save us. Do something. Change this. And when the people start hoping out loud, power starts paying attention. Jesus wasn't killed for being nice. He was killed for being a problem. We're still living this story. When systems feel threatened, they respond with pressure, fear, and force. It's easy to shout 'Hosanna.' The real question is: What happens next? When hope rises... will you show up? And will you stay when it costs something?"*

Now, let's take it piece by piece alongside our story for today. Sandlin wrote: *"Palm Sunday wasn't a parade. It was a protest. There were two processions entering Jerusalem. One from the empire. One from the people. Jesus entered on a humble donkey. The empire entered with horses and chariots."* The procession he refers to from the empire was the representatives of the Roman occupying army trying to keep all of the people of the area under their control – with horses and chariots as their pomp and circumstance. Jesus chose to ride into town on a colt and her foal in order to be among (right alongside) his neighbors in the resistance – seeing one another eyeball to eyeball, heart to heart.

Let's offer our resources in solidarity with Jesus' way of prophetic teaching, healing, and pursuit of justice as the children and their adults did when we heard: *"A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road."*

Continuing from Mark Sandlin: *"'Hosanna' didn't mean 'Yay.' It meant: Save us. Do something. Change this."* Some of us know from our religious upbringing and others of us may know from our neighbors that 'yay!' is for those who are practicing and believing in a white apocalyptic nationalism that's cloaked in the word "Christian." That's having it all figured out – Yay! We have all the answers. Some of us belong. Others don't belong. Some of us are right. Others of us are wrong.

Can we practice humility alongside Jesus – to continue to seek and participate in God’s salvation for our society?

Again, from Mark Sandlin: *“And when the people start hoping out loud, power starts paying attention. Jesus wasn’t killed for being nice. He was killed for being a problem.”* Whether you were there in person or heard it on the news, yesterday our Governor Walz stated that many of us have been “radicalized by compassion” – enough so that we are acting out of that core value in as many spaces and ways as possible. Radical compassion.

And we know how contagious the joy of practicing compassion can be. We heard it in the story for today just like we’ve felt it in our time. *“The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!’”* Their desperately hopeful, faithful cry.

Continuing from Mark Sandlin: *“We’re still living this story. When systems feel threatened, they respond with pressure, fear, and force. It’s easy to shout ‘Hosanna.’ The real question is: What happens next? When hope rises... will you show up? And will you stay when it costs something?”*

Well. Or to be culturally specific: Ope! Here’s what happened next in the story: *“Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. He said to them, ‘It is written, “My house shall be called a house of prayer,” but you are making it a den of robbers.’... But when the chief priests and the scribes... heard the children crying out in the temple and saying, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David,’ they became angry and said to him, ‘Do you hear what these are saying?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Yes; have you never read, “Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself”?’”*

Then and now, the children are watching. The children are following, patterning themselves after us. And, when we are humble enough to see it, the children are also leading the way. Are we brave enough to model for them and to follow them in turning over the tables of justice in our time as a community of all ages?

I was touched by the devotional by Molly Baskette and share two brief quotes from it: *"It is a burlesque, the wild joyous guerilla theatre of the revolutionary in place of the solemn, people-silencing pageantry of the dictator."* In my Christian faith, I choose to imagine Jesus of Nazareth (that Palestinian Jewish leader) as having deeply etched crow's feet that developed out of sharing with his neighbors in kindness and good humor. And he supposedly only lived into his 30s, but I believe those crow's feet were deep.

Jesus was alongside each neighbor at 3,300 rallies held yesterday across this land and at least 40 more across the international community. And he will be alongside each of the thousands of Christians who gather today at Palm Sunday Faith Actions across the country. On both occasions, I imagine Jesus greeting neighbors and delighting in clever hand-made signs proclaiming the power of love and justice and community.

Molly Baskette also wrote this: *"His example of sovereignty over violence and ego did not end human monarchies or despots ruling hard over their people, as his disciples hoped then and hope still... Where is our No-King now when we need him most?"* We know the answer. We are the answer. As paraphrased from Mahatma Ghandi, *"We must be the change we want to see in the world."* Let's move into the Holy Week with resolve to embody love and justice in the way of our beautiful nonviolent protestor leader, Jesus. Love is counting on us. Amen.

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