

Immanuel United Church
April 10th, 2022
Palm Sunday

Welcome

Hymns: VU 122 *All Glory, Laud and Honour*
(*We invite you to wave a scarf.*)

Call to Worship:
(*by Murray Pruden, Indigenous Minister for Pacific Mountain Region (UCC)*)

Come and pray as we are to remember and shout:
Hosanna in the highest, deliver us we pray.

The Palm Sunday approach reminds us that God has entered our lives.
As we take the time in our own way to unite in Spirit
the coming of Jesus into the city of Jerusalem,
as he did on what we recognize as Palm Sunday,
**Jesus enters our lives now during our time of need today
as we pray for all of life's creation.**

Hymn: VU 123 *Hosanna, Loud Hosanna*

Prayer: (*by Murray Pruden, Indigenous Minister for Pacific Mountain Region (UCC)*)

Hear us, loving God, as we pray. We pray for our Nations living together here on Turtle Island, within this country we call Canada, and the numerous territories of the Indigenous peoples of this great land. We pray for children and youth to grow strong and be mindful of your teachings and the wonderful land you have provided for all creations to live together as one. We appreciate the wisdom of our peoples, the Elders, and the many ancestors and loved ones who came and left before us, and who are with us still. For they are your wisdom and knowledge, and teachers of livelihood. All your teachings, the good and the bad, are great. They make us the loving and blessed people we are today. Jesus taught us about the path of love. Let your blessed love embrace all those, including us here today, wherever we may dwell, that need and require a source of comfort and joy. And may we all journey along a humble path in the many ways we do—for the sake of unity and understanding, the acceptance of our differences, and kindness. With your gentle breeze, give us hope. We pray for this in Jesus' name and for the ways of peace and grace.

Hosanna in the highest. Deliver us, we pray. Amen.

Hymn: MV 161 *I Have Called You By Your Name*

Scripture: Matthew 21:1–11 *Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem*

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, "Tell the daughter of Zion, look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 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!"

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

The Choir Anthem: He Came Riding On a Donkey

Reflection: On the Silent Cry...

*'The hope whose ground is not in certainty but in its abyss, its void; ...
God who is not the winner but prefers the midnight of hunger...'
(From The Silent Cry by Dorothee Soelle)*

On this day of Palms and Passion, the Sunday of Christ's Paradox before entering into the holy week of the cross and Easter, Jesus rides on a donkey on the road to Jerusalem,

in a story mixing exultation and exhaustion (among the people), glory for the nation-saving King and the suffering of the servant for all (that is Jesus).

I imagine that if these ongoing juxtapositions of the opposite realities of the life of Jesus had happened in my life, it would be exhausting. Think of Covid. One day, we feel that the end of this long pandemic tunnel is in view, but the next day that hope meets quick disappointment. The tunnel's end, alas, is just another bend, one of the many curves of this long, winding passage. The light from the opposite end is still so dim. The repetition of hoping and letting go, "almost there" and "not yet", further parches the dryness of our souls and deepens the weariness.

How dry is it? Here's my story to tell: Just after New Year's, I finally called the piano tuner to come to our house and check our Yamaha upright piano which we bought 2 years ago. When he was almost finished tuning, thinking that I would hear some compliment like "It's a good piano.", I asked quite inquisitively, "How is the piano?" The tuner's face was not as cheerful as I would wish, and he said sternly, "Your piano is suffering. The humidity reader I put on the piano cannot even read how dry it is in here. It cannot read when humidity is below 15 percent. This is the driest home I have visited this month..." I was so shocked. What he meant was that the living room, where I was, is... a desert! A desert to both the piano and humans.

A humidifier in a Manitoban Winter home is just like the spiritual nourishment we need for the dryness of our souls through this Covid desert. What today's Gospel suggests is that Jesus offers the mystery of God's paradox, and shows us how the contradictions of life's betrayal and blessings can be - are indeed, part of God's invitation for us. He's saying that the paradox of palms and passion is the path!

What?

That exultation and exhaustion in repetition is not just a curse.

What?

What is important is our attitude, more than how rocky, parched, dry, or rough the road is. We don't want to be on this rocky road, this endless tunnel. But see Jesus. He rides on a donkey on that road, at the pace of the colt which shares the burden with its mother, slow and patient and steady, the long road to Jerusalem, where the tombstone would never be removed without a miracle, and where Easter must bloom like the crocus in Isaiah's prophecy, in the middle of a parched land, over-run by drought.

Some months after our dear member Linda Murray died, her partner, Gerry, called me and asked me to visit and help him give away some of her books in the house. Among many books, I found *The Silent Cry*, written by Dorothee Solle (explain about the author

briefly) on Linda's bookshelf. Her signature on the first page (show it on powerpoint) was special. Linda treated her books well, leaving every book to look brand-new.

Linda... I remember her through three unforgettable episodes. First one: One Sunday after service, she emerged from the assembled congregants, stopped in front of me, and said "Hi, I am Linda Murray. I've been quiet so you may not know me, but now I would like to introduce myself..."

The second scene was after one of the Advent services in 2018. She was looking up at me, her eyes overflowing with tears, and she said something like, "I cannot foresee what would come next, but I will be away for a while..." That time, I was told that she, the survivor of cancer long before, was suffering from the side-effects of compound medications.

The last scene was at a coffee shop - - our last visit. Linda opened the door and came in. She could not hide her exhaustion; she was visibly weaker, not even able to eat properly. But we had scheduled a meeting for coffee, so she dragged her tired body, out of curiosity and commitment to someone she cared about, and she was so hungry. I do not remember what we talked about that day, but I do remember how she taught me something words alone cannot convey. It was grace. That incredible human quality of honouring, being driven by conviction, commitment, and care even for just one friend. I firmly believe it is close to, it resembles the divine quality Jesus must have shown on the road to Jerusalem, the road of paradox, exultation and exhaustion, fulfilment and hunger - the profound hunger that does not come just from physical need but the deepest longing for communion within.

That's the true Easter that passes on generation after generation, as long as God still creates new things amongst us and in creation on earth, (like a crocus as the sign of spring, still surrounded by melting snow), and as long as we plant the invincible name called Hope (which Emily Dickinson sings in her poem, "I sowed my pageantry / In May —"). I remember, in December, a month before Linda departed from us, I asked her what message she would like to hear from the church, and she answered, "Hope". At the time, a certain word-arrow pierced my brain at lightning speed which I didn't say out loud — "How can anyone find hope from someone else's words, when it can only be generated from within by their own self..."

But Ha Na, my soul, doubtful Thomas, you should know that *Hope abounds*, you can hear it, touch it, embrace it, convince yourself of it, when friends, family, creations are

able to share it. Everyone has a piece of it, and we need each other. We *can* hear words of hope from each other. We definitely can hold it high with each other. We can expect it, express it, when we intentionally put our small pieces together to make the whole circle of hope, and therefore, hope abounds. It becomes the seed for us to plant in the ground. Hope ripens when we can share it. Hope breeds more hope.

Here are a few quotes from the book *The Silent Cry* about the paradox, the mystery, the hope of this day, of these times. Hope is distant, and at the same time it is also near, within our reach.

*'The hope whose ground is not in certainty but in its abyss, its void; ...
God who is not the winner but prefers the midnight of hunger...'
(From *The Silent Cry* by Dorothee Soelle)*

*From the chapter, *The Paradox**

"One thinks of such expressions as 'darklight', 'sadjoyous' 'bittersweet', 'eloquent silence', 'filled emptiness', 'acquired dispossession.'"

'Other bold word images are "whispering silence," "fertile desert," "soundless tone," and "silent cry".'

"A song of the contemporary Dutch community-based movement contains this stanza:

*The desert shall bloom, it shall laugh and rejoice,
Water shall run and it shall glisten,
The thirsty come and drink
The desert shall drink and it shall bloom."*

This is the traditional mystical image of the desert... inspired by Isaiah.

There is a poem, originating in the circle around the mystic, Meister Eckhart, and passed on anonymously, in which paradox comes in the form of verbs:

*"O my soul, go out; God, come in!
When I flee from you, you come to me.
When I lose myself, I find you..."*

Fleeing and coming, losing and finding become one process.
Palm and Passion,
Exultation and exhaustion,
The cross and Easter...
Become one process with God.

The following is the full text of the Cradle Board's Closing Statment,
spoken to Pope Francis, in Rome.

The Cradle Board is on its way home to us. Deep in its fibers is the words that was spoken to Pope Francis. These words were spoken and authored by Kaluhyanuwes Michelle Shenandoah Powless.

Closing Statement

You have heard the voices of our people this week. We are living peoples, human beings with souls. We come in the footsteps of our ancestors, elders and leaders, and many who still request an audience from you. All those you have heard this week represent only the smallest numbers of Indigenous peoples impacted by the Papal Bulls that make up the Doctrine of Discovery, which has given settler nation states an illegitimate assumption of authority over our people and land for over 500 hundreds years.

The Doctrine of Discovery led to the continual taking of our babies to this day, the disappearance of thousands of our women who have gone missing or murdered. Women who would have been mothers, sisters, aunties, grandmothers, community members, the backbone of our nations. It allows the settler colonial states to take our babies and leave them vulnerable to societal ills that create broken families. It has led to the displacement of our men into broken states and prison states, separated from the ability to be fathers and healthy individuals. And it has led to the dispossession of our lands.

It has deprived us of our dignity, our freedom and led to the exploitation of our Mother Earth, from which she now pushes back against humanity to listen, while she cleanses herself from the harms we humans have done to her.

These Papal Bulls that make up the Doctrine of Discovery also opened the door to slavery in the western world, and stole the lives and dignity of our African brothers and sisters.

It has given the right for all peoples of the world to view Indigenous peoples as dispensable, while violently taking our Mother Earth for personal and institutional riches, for which our precious metals (from the Americas) adorn these halls.

The Doctrine of Discovery has enslaved the entire world since 1493 to today, to view us

to treat us

to take from us

to murder and rape us

and to destroy our culture

to decimate and invisibilize us

It's been a long genocide across all of Turtle Island that has been legalized under these Papal Bulls

Laws are held up by the Doctrine of Discovery that are discriminatory, and exploitative acts that destroy people, families, children and Mother Earth are deemed legal to this day.

Laws create policies, policies shape education and education shapes behavior, and how people around the world have come to treat us and see us.

Among my generation, I was born in a year when it was illegal to practice our spiritual and traditional way of life. In my generation, I was born when the United Nations only referred to my people as flora and fauna. Our Indigenous peoples according to the Doctrine of Discovery are without souls.

The world has responded and acted accordingly to the precepts that Indigenous peoples, as non Christians do not have souls and therefore have no right to our bodies, our children, our lands, our governments or our futures As people, under our own ways of life, governance and existence, do have souls, and together we are all human beings.

You have the responsibility to forever turn the hand of fate toward peace.

Toward a future all families around the world dream about for their children, for each other, and for the world they live in

This here is called a cradleboard and it used to carry our children in. We can even hang the board on a high place so our children are eye level with us and feel equal and included.

I am leaving this board with you overnight. This is a symbol of every Indigenous child who went to a residential boarding school across Turtle Island. Those who survived and those who did not. In our way, when making decisions, we often sleep on the issue at hand.

How you treat this cradleboard tonight will be how you come to treat our people in the future.

When the sun rises, I ask for their spirits to be re-matriated, restored to a high place of sacredness, because you will have decided to make things right. I am sent to you by one of our traditional Clan Mothers of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, where laws of peace have prevailed for over 1,000 years, where our democracy was given to the world, and where our rights of women were also given to the world.

As Indigenous peoples we have gifts to offer the world once again, to bring balance in living with Mother Earth, and peacemaking processes and to live with each other as human kind. You only need only to open the door and your heart for all of the world to hear us, by revoking the Papal Bulls that contain the Doctrine of Discovery.

Today, we come to you to implore you to release the world from its place of enslavement that consciously and unconsciously grips every soul on this planet by these insidious Papal Bulls.

This cradleboard is the symbol of our collective future. We ask that you make it right, so the world may truly move forward in peace and make it right with Indigenous peoples and restore dignity toward our peoples, so that all our souls may be at peace with each other.

Tomorrow we will reconvene one more time. I will retrieve this cradleboard to bring home to Turtle Island, symbolic of bringing our children back home to us.

Yaw^ko, a grand thank you for hearing our words today. We have come a long way carrying many prayers. I ask for all of Creation and the maker of our beings, who we call the Great Creator to be with us. Let us sleep on these matters, and make them right. We give great thanks for each other, for all of life and for this time together.

Hymn: VU 647 *Travel On, Travel On*

<https://youtu.be/kf-UmpwxMWY>

Offering

Prayers of the People:

*'The hope whose ground is not in certainty but in its abyss, its void;...
God who is not the winner but prefers the midnight of hunger...'
(From the Silent Cry, Dorothee Solle)*

Enduring Spirit,
who does not break in suffering,
nor wander from truth,
empower us to follow your bold commands: to know God,
to love God's way, to hold back from evil, to hate false ways,
to proclaim the gospel...

You,
who rode into town not on your high horse but on a lowly colt,
you who comes in the name of God,
in this time of killing and war,
may we, and the very stones,
shout your command of peace and justice.

You, who prefers the midnight of hunger over 'power-over',
and makes solidarity with those who are hungry, lack of food or lack of peace,
comfort the afflicted and heal the broken.
Feed us this day at your table of life and hope.
Teach us walk the ways of gentleness and peace in your world.

Creator God, accept all we offer you this day:
Our prayers for your vulnerable children;
our grief for your beloveds,
especially Indigenous women, girls and Two Spirit and all,
our hope in your healing and reconciling love.

May all who inhabit this sacred place today, in body, soul, mind and heart, be drawn
even more deeply through compassion into love for All Relations; may they/we be
renewed in hope; and may they/we be strengthened to serve along the pathways to
which the sacred calls.

This we pray in the power of the Enduring Spirit, through Jesus, our brother, who
walked in the desert, the wilderness of the void of Word, just as he did on the road to
Jerusalem with God's Word of Promise in mind:

The desert shall bloom, it shall laugh and rejoice.
Water shall run and it shall glisten,
The thirsty come and drink
The desert shall drink and it shall bloom.

Amen.

Hymn: VU 639 *One More Step Along the World I Go*

Commissioning and Benediction:

God loves you and blesses you.

We pray that you always love yourself,

Heal and take care of yourself,

With the guidance of Jesus our friend and teacher,

The Holy Spirit that brings us the source of our being,

And the Creator, the maker of it all.

Amen.