

# in the big love living liturgies

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent/Palm Sunday “Women Series I” • Liturgical Year A • Matthew 21:1-11

*prepared by Rev. Kathryn M. Schreiber*

## Scripture Text

Matthew 21:1-11 "Riding into Jerusalem"

## This Week's Lenten Women and Theme

“Women in the Crowd: Our Hope” Sermon reframes “the crowd” from the original people who supported Jesus as he entered Jerusalem to include all the women who have welcomed and served Jesus Christ in the centuries since.

## Suggested Hymns/Songs

"All Glory, Laud and Honor"

Words: Theodulph of Orleans; Tune: ST THEODOULPH

"Ride On! Ride On in Majesty"

Words: Henry Milman; Tune: ST DROSTANE

"A Cheering, Chanting, Dizzy Crowd"

Words: Thomas Troeger; Tune: MORNING SONG

"Rejoice, You Pure in Heart"

Words: Edward Plumptre; Tune: MARION

"O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing"

Words: Charles Wesley; Tune: AZMON

"O Christ Jesus, Sent from Heaven"

Words: James Crawford; Tune: WESTMINSTER ABBEY

## Meditation Quote about The Crowd

*"I assert that the most fundamental quality of community is some degree of expanded identity - a sense of "we-ness" - a state of feeling connected or joined with another." -- Bryan Husted, 21c. sociology professor*

## Invocation (responsive)

Liturgist: Dear Jesus - ride before us -  
making a way for all people to equally adore and serve You,  
O Humble Messiah, sent by God!

People: **Hosanna in the Highest!**

Liturgist: Dear Jesus - ride before us -  
steering us through the maze of questions about You,  
O Child of Royalty, O Prophet of Nazareth!

People: **Hosanna in the Highest!**

Liturgist: Dear Jesus - ride before us -  
paving the way with grace for all our days and nights,  
O Everlasting Christ, our eternal hope!

People: **Hosanna in the Highest!** ✠ (kms)

## Prayer for Becoming

Dearest Companion,  
Call us into action borrowing whatever You need - (cont'd)

donkeys and colts, upper rooms and tables.  
 Invite us to join You in festive excitement  
 as the human pulse of hope beats strong  
 pushing us past sharp corners and other dangers.

Brave Leader,  
 Lure us into the crowd pressing forward  
 even when our breath clutches with sorrow  
 or our minds choke with fear.  
 Challenge us to lift the palms higher, higher,  
 waving the beauty of our hope,  
 astounded by the energy around us -  
 the vast expression of triumph  
 which forever surrounds You. Amen. ✠ (kms)

### Living Word for Children

“The Crowd”

*(Before Worship: Younger members of the church may join the opening procession waving palms. If so, please demonstrate safe palm-waving before the service begins. Also, ahead of time, designate members of the congregation to represent the different groups mentioned below. Each should have a palm to wave.)*

*On this Palm Sunday we help the children imagine all the people who have followed Jesus, especially women. Ask the children if they can remember the Biblical women we met this Lent, may share props to help them remember. Move to enacting the recreation of a timeless crowd, calling out: “Women of the Bible who Followed Jesus -- Join the Crowd!” The representative stands and waves her palm. Do this with other such groups such as: “Our Female Ancestors who Converted to Christianity - Join the Crowd”, etc. (i.e. “Our Founding Mothers of this Congregation,” “Women of the Church today” “Girls of the Church today and tomorrow,” and “All the Men and Boys”) The children might have great ideas about who to call out to ask to “Join the Crowd” too! Looking at all the people waving palms, explain to the children that all these people are their crowd. They belong to a huge crowd of people who love Jesus and they always will. We are eternally bound together through our shared love of God through Christ.*

### Prayer with Children (\*all repeat)

Dear God \* We love Jesus! \* We are part of the Crowd! \* Thank You \* for all the people  
 \* who love Jesus.\* Hosanna! \* Amen! \* ✠ (kms)

### Living Word for Adults

“Women in the Crowd: Our Hope” *(sermon script)*

*(Note: This is a great opportunity for including all-church participation. Either before Palm Sunday or during the service invite church-goers to remember Christian women who are in “The Crowd.” There might be an artful display area where names can be written on colored paper and hung up to be seen; or congregants might be asked to speak, briefly, about women they wish to remember during the sermon time; or names could be called out as each group of women is mentioned at the end of the sermon. The Holy Spirit, and millions of female Christian souls in heaven, will be more than happy to give you ideas!) (cont’d)*

Original Crowd

On Palm Sunday

our spiritual imaginations place us  
smack dab in the middle of The Crowd...  
the people in Jerusalem  
responding to the triumphant entry  
of Jesus into the Holy City.

This year, I hope this ancient crowd  
seems a bit more in focus  
as we've been spending time this Lent  
with different biblical women  
who personally knew the historical Jesus.

Today, when we join The Crowd  
we can imagine Jesus' female disciples present,  
women like Mary Magdalene  
who left behind their previous work  
to join his travelling movement --  
as students, supporters, donors.  
Some of these women became  
leaders of the Early Church.

Also in The Crowd are Jesus' family members,  
his mother Mary, her family members.  
But there also would have been other relatives.  
Depending on how you read some verses...  
also present were Jesus' brothers and sisters.  
Some say these siblings  
were children of his father,  
Joseph's offspring from an earlier marriage,  
some say that Mary, his mother,  
had other children with Joseph, some say she didn't.  
Jesus would have also had  
aunts, and uncles, cousins and on and on.  
Amid the crowd were many women who were  
blood and marriage kin to Jesus of Nazareth.

There would have been many Jewish women in The Crowd  
cheering on the one they believed was the Messiah  
foretold by the Hebrew Prophets,  
but there would have been women  
from other ethnicities and religions, too.  
There was a woman from Samaria who became a preacher  
after her encounter with Jesus at a well.  
Might she have inspired others  
to come and see Jesus enter Jerusalem?

Surely, among The Crowd,  
were women like the Blind Man's Mother -- *(cont'd)*

women whose lives had been radically changed  
 because Jesus healed a male family member-  
 a person whom she was dependent upon.  
 Women who had witnessed  
 the healing of a sick or haunted love one.  
 Women, who themselves,  
 had been healed by His touch.  
 Such women were The Crowd.

The women who were hosting  
 new circles of the followers of Jesus,  
 women who were friends and co-workers in faith,  
 like Martha and Mary of Bethany,  
 would have been there, too.  
 Women who prepared the elements needed  
 for each ritual celebrated.  
 Women who studied His teachings  
 and passed them on to others.  
 All the women who became disciples.  
 Such women would have walked  
 through the palms and cheers,  
 accompanying Jesus,  
 as He entered Jerusalem.

#### Why Women?

There would have been many, many women  
 in That Crowd, I believe.

In Jesus' short ministry of three and a half years  
 he consistently demonstrated  
 an abiding respect for all people,  
 including women,  
 often at the expense  
 of keeping social and religious codes.

It would well have been  
 that what made Jesus most threatening  
 to those in power --  
 the male Temple leadership  
 and the male Roman leadership --  
 was that Jesus provided new ways  
 of bring humans together --  
 ways that broke sexist customs of abuse of power.

I suspect that the same factors  
 that drew 1<sup>st</sup> century women to Jesus,  
 are the same factors  
 that continue to appeal to 21<sup>st</sup> century  
 women and men, and those of gender fluidity -  
 anyone who has felt rejected by community or state. (*cont'd*)

Jesus did, and does,  
 offer everyone a liberating relationship with God  
 based upon mutual respect and dignity.  
 A path of freedom and responsibility.  
 A path of opportunity and obligation.

### The Huge Crowd

Initially, when I thought about "The Crowd"  
 I thought about the original gathering  
 of people who would have been in Jerusalem,  
 physically present with Jesus of Nazareth.  
 I thought of The Crowd as those people  
 who would have seen a rural rabbi riding on a donkey.  
 But, that understanding of "The Crowd"  
 is inaccurate - for it is too small, too limited.

Years ago I saw a beautiful piece of installation art  
 in a large Catholic sanctuary.  
 It was a collection of twenty-five panels  
 displayed in a five by five configuration  
 to make one very large square  
 rather like a blank Rubric's cube.  
 On the first day of December all the panels  
 were turned to a blank side except for one.  
 It showed Mary.  
 I think we all presumed  
 that the surrounding twenty-four panels  
 would be turned over daily  
 to reveal a traditional Nativity scene.  
 But this wasn't the case!

The images revealed, day by day,  
 danced throughout time -  
 a modern woman with a briefcase  
 stood beside a medieval farmer holding his hoe.  
 The sanctuary held daily services,  
 so I started going - eager to see  
 what each day would reveal.  
 And, it was amazing!  
 Everyday another expression  
 of humanity was revealed.

At Christmas Eve mass  
 the final panel in the lower right hand was revealed -  
 an ordinary baby boy with black hair and brown skin.  
 This smiling infant was our beloved Jesus of Nazareth  
 AND the symbol of the arrival on earth of the eternal Christ.

What if we had such a work of art for Palm Sunday?  
 Which persons would we depict as being in The Crowd? (*cont'd*)

People of diverse genders, races, ages  
 from throughout the past two thousand years,  
 all moving in the same direction,  
 toward a panel that is, as of today, unrevealed --  
 a panel that next Sunday  
 would show an empty tomb.

The Crowd, spiritually,  
 is the Christian Cloud of Witnesses,  
 all the people,  
 from all the places,  
 throughout time,  
 who have followed Christ  
 as a way to connect with God.  
 And amid that Huge Crowd,  
 are many, many, many women.

#### Calling our Sisters in Christ

Let us take a moment  
 to create in our imaginations  
 some women in that huge Crowd...

Call to mind...  
 female Christian leaders...  
 not just institutional Church leaders,  
 but women of Christian faith who held great power  
 and used it to change the landscape  
 of the communities they ruled...  
 women like Mary, Queen of Scots.  
 They are part of The Crowd.

Call to mind...  
 the women in your families...  
 your mothers, grandmothers, and on back,  
 from whatever nation or culture they came from.  
 Remember all the women who told you about Jesus,  
 through the stories they told and the lives they lived.  
 They are part of The Crowd.

Call to mind...  
 the women who converted to Christianity...  
 because it gave them something  
 their culture's wisdom could not.  
 Today, I am thinking of women  
 from around the world  
 who are Christians now,  
 but who were not born into a Christian family.  
 Think of all the conversions,  
 and how those households  
 were, and are, changed, (*cont'd*)

when the mother of the home  
becomes a disciple of Jesus.  
They are part of The Crowd.

Call to mind...  
the healed girls and women and their families...  
And, the women who practice healing arts in Jesus' name.  
Women who have touched the untouchables,  
for centuries, because Jesus touched their souls.  
Women who found strength  
to provide medical and emotional care,  
because they were held by Christ.  
They are part of The Crowd.

Call to mind...  
all the women who have given of their time and talents  
to keep the everyday tasks of Christ's church going...  
Each morsel of food prepared... for the Church,  
Each garment made, tended, mended... for the Church.  
Each decoration, act of cleaning, office work, teaching...  
on and on. All done ... for the Church.  
Imagine all the women,  
all their hours of work, over the ages  
which has ensured the sacred worship  
of God through Christ,  
the support and nurture  
of those who preached the Gospel,  
and offered the Sacraments,  
as well as their own ministry efforts,  
too often labeled secondary,  
yet which have vested successive communities  
with the faith we've inherited today.  
They are part of The Crowd.

#### Our Crowd

This is a HUGE CROWD!  
And we are a part of it, too!  
Today, we also wave palms!  
Today, we also sing Hosanna's!  
Today, as most Sundays, we are mostly female.  
Yet, always, all of us, are a part of The Crowd.

All of us are here because of Jesus Christ.  
Through Him, we meet and experience  
the Big Love, God's Divine Presence  
which deeply respects, heals, and empowers us.  
In this Holy Compassion  
we are transformed more fully into life,  
as are those with whom we share the Big Love. (cont'd)

No matter who we are.  
 No matter where we are on life's journey.  
 No matter our gender identity.  
 We have found welcome with Jesus.  
 So, we are HERE today!

We are all part of The Crowd.  
 Together, today, we honor and celebrate  
 the one who comes in the Name of the Lord.  
 Hosanna in the Highest! AMEN. ✠ (kms)

### **Pastoral Prayer**

Ever-Giving God,  
 Today we join The Crowd, celebrating the gift of Jesus Christ.  
 Celebrating Your profound care for us  
 and for all who receive Your holy life-changing gifts.  
 You are forever giving humanity messiahs  
 and moments of redemptive salvation to all people,  
 regardless of the name we give to You.

Increase our ability to perceive all You do for us.  
 Enhance our desire to praise all You do for us.  
 Awaken our knowledge that You have surrounded us  
 with an amazing crowd of faith -  
 persons in the body, and souls in the spirit.  
 Never, ever, are we alone.  
 Never, ever, are we separated from You. Amen. ✠ (kms)

### **Prayer of Dedication/Offering**

As we gather in joy and gratitude, as we assemble as The Crowd, we gather in Your name, Jesus Christ. For all You have been, and are, and will be -- we celebrate by sharing what God has given us. Blessed are You! Hosanna! Hosanna in the Highest! Amen. ✠ (kms)

### **Worship Resources:**

WomanWord, Miriam Therese Winter; All of the Women of the Bible, Edith Deen.

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