

## Bible Challenge March 14 - 20, 2016

### INTRODUCTION

*In the readings for Palm Sunday, the voice of the suffering savior, Jesus, can be heard in the prophet Isaiah's words and the pleading of the psalm. We are invited into the agony of our Lord in the extended reading of the story of Jesus' passion. In the second reading, we who have put on Christ in holy baptism are urged to let the mind of Christ be our own. Lent leads us to this holy moment. Embrace it.*

### PROCESSIONAL GOSPEL: Luke 19:28-40

*A special reading for Palm Sunday, this passage relates the story of Palm Sunday, Jesus entry into Jerusalem. To gain a larger perspective on his entry, read all of Luke 19 which begins in Jericho and ends with the cleansing of the temple.*

### FIRST READING: Isaiah 50:4-9a

*This text, the third of the four Servant Songs in Isaiah, speaks of the servant's obedience in the midst of persecution. Though the servant has been variously understood as the prophet himself or a remnant of faithful Israel, Christians have often recognized the figure of Christ in these poems.*

**Adventure Challenge:** Isaiah 50

**Explorer Challenge:** Option A. Research "servant songs in Isaiah."

Option B: Isaiah 50 is poetry that builds upon contrasting ideas or images; examples: *fear of God* verses *trust in God*; *flint* verses *a moth-eaten garment*. Identify as many of the contrasting words and images as you can; how do these contrasts help to emphasize Isaiah's ideas and express "the mind of Christ"?

**PSALM: Psalm 31:9-16.** *Into your hands, O LORD, I commend my spirit. (Ps. 31:5)*

**Adventure Challenge:** Psalm 31.

**Explorer Challenge:** According to Luke's gospel, the words of Psalm 31:5 are Jesus' last words on the cross. Re-read Psalm 31, especially 9-16, to see how well this Psalm might express Jesus' thoughts at this difficult time (during the events recorded in the Gospel reading below).

### SECOND READING: Philippians 2:5-11

*Paul quotes from an early Christian hymn that describes Jesus' humble obedience in his incarnation as a human being, even to death, and his exaltation and glory as Lord of all.*

**Adventure Challenge:** Philippians 2:1-18.

**Explorer Challenge:** Philippians 2:5-11 is widely regarded by Biblical scholars as words that Paul is quoting from an early Christian hymn. Use an annotated Bible or a Bible reference to explore in more depth the importance and meaning of this passage. Does it change your understanding to view these words as part of a hymn?

### GOSPEL: Luke 22:14—23:56

*Through the teachings and events of the passion story we see and hear the great contradictions that characterize the coming of God's reign. The leader serves, the empty disciples are able to fill others, proud Peter is revealed in his cowardice, and Jesus—the innocent bringer of life—is arrested, beaten, executed, and buried.*

**Adventure Challenge:** Luke 22:14 – 23:56.

**Explorer Challenge:** Research any question that arises in this reading. Examples:

- What elements from the Jewish Passover celebration are present or represented in communion?
- Where did these events take place? Use a map of Jerusalem, to locate the places mentioned.
- Where are Cyrene, Galilee, and Arimathea? are they important places?

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Sovereign God, you have established your rule in the human heart through the servanthood of Jesus Christ. By your Spirit, keep us in the joyful procession of those who with their tongues confess Jesus as Lord and with

their lives praise him as Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Christ 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. (*Phil. 2:8-9*)