God is our rock and our fortress. We can rely on God to help us hear, not only words of celebration, but words of anguish – words that challenge and distress us. May God open our ears, our eyes and our hearts to let the Scripture into our souls and fill us with steadfast love. Amen.

We emerge – figuratively and spiritually since so many of us are waiting for the day we can actually emerge-this week from our wilderness wanderings and find ourselves caught up in a parade, a party, a procession of palms! It has been a long journey to arrive at the gates of Jerusalem where Jesus will make his grand entry into the heart of political power and religious authority. And we celebrate hesitantly- because we know what is to come. . We know that Palm Sunday is a celebration with a shadow. We know that the carpet of palm branches soon led to the cross. The joy of Palm Sunday points us to the passion of Good Friday. Palm Sunday was the day that sealed Jesus’ fate. After Palm Sunday Jesus couldn’t take it back even if he had wanted to ~ the teachings, the healings. Palm Sunday was the point of no return. The shouts of ‘Hosanna’ soon became cries of, ‘Crucify him’.

We have not arrived here by chance. We have spent a considerable amount of time remembering who we are and whose we are. We have spent weeks returning our hearts to the Our God, the Father

As we took this Lenten journey, we have devoted the last five weeks to intentionally imitating Christ, repenting, coming together, even as we are apart and embracing the new thing that God is already doing within us and among us. We have drank the living water, been given the sight to see and witnessed the miracles of being raised from the dead. It has been a season of turning our hearts to the One whose promises are bigger than the stars; a season of fasting from the things that harm, while feasting on grace. If we have walked the pathway in this purposeful prayer and self-reflection, we have discovered that the very landscape of our hearts has been turned and cultivated. This season- has hopefully – despite the world around us and the strange season we have traveled reshaped our aching and broken hearts. The entire journey up until this point is what has prepared us—and our hearts—to enter these final days of Lent, to walk with Jesus, to remember his final days on earth, to endure the heartache of his death.

We sit in astounded awe in amazement as Jesus takes this journey and completely empties himself on the cross.

He has no status, no friends,  even at one point it seems, no faith- Why O God have your forsaken me.

He cries out and then he has no breath.  His life is poured out.

Yet, in the face of this despair the man who looked straight at him, who saw him

A soldier, a stranger a gentile- said in wonder

“ Surely this is the Son of God.”

The moment of complete emptying was a holy moment.

The moment of deepest despair was a sacred time.

The temple curtain was torn in two- something new was happening.

God had entered our world in a new way.

Hung with the deepest, most anguished most troubled human experience

And tore it open- God entered our life, through the death of his son

And in that- Created a channel for love/ unconditional/ gracefilled love to flow.

I had a conversation with my mom the other day about a mutual friend. She had been having some medical issues and with some help from people who cared for her they brought it to her daughters attention. At that time the daughters eyes were opened and she has now been much more attentive to her mother.

Sometimes thatss what it takes. Having someone get to a very low point before others have their eyes opened. Happens to me sometimes… I get too wrapped up in what I am doing…church, school, my congregation, my classes- see the pattern- all me… and then people in my family hit a very low point. And then my eyes are opened. I really wish it only takes one time of that happening for me or anyone to never let it happen again… but it doesn’t.

And isn’t that the truth with our relationship with Jesus and our Father? We get to such a low point and reach for them- and they are always there and we are lifted up. And you would think It would only take one time for us to always hold on to that…. But it doesn’t.

And that is the reason we walk through this Lenten journey. This is why we celebrate and lament Palm/Passion Sunday We do this so when we do fall or struggle to reach out… he is still always there He walked this path so we don’t have to. How many times have you heard that? Probably a million- but are you hearing it? This year, during this particular Lenten journey, during this strange yet uplifting time… are you hearing…He walked the path, walked to the cross for us. For our redemption. Because he loves us even when we forget to reach out.In the days to come our journey will take us into Jerusalem and through the story of Jesus’ betrayal, rejection, torturers and death. We will see his friends fall away. We will hear his tortures taunt him with a crown of thorns, calling him “King of the Jews” as they laugh. It is not an easy story to hear. In fact it’s easier to go from Hosanna to resurrection and skip over the cries of “Crucify Him.” But it’s an important story. In fact, I would say that it is the most important story ever told because when we walk with Jesus to the cross we find out what is most important in life ~ and it has nothing to do with personal power, prestige, or popularity and everything to do with love.

Let Us Pray:

Are you ever amazed, O Lord, at our responses to the Savior? We get all excited about the parade into Jerusalem. We gather palm fronds and distribute them among those present so that they can wave them in triumph, replicating the parade and the crowd. Children sing the praises of Jesus. Adults remove their cloaks and place them on the road in front of the donkey so that he may not make a misstep. We could stay at this scene forever and enjoy the moment. But we are being called forward, through the gates of the Holy City to the Temple and from the Temple to the Cross. Be with us and give us courage to face what lies ahead. Strengthen our faith that we will remain steadfast at the time of reckoning;

“Truly this man Jesus was God’s Son.”
As disciples of Jesus, truly you are God’s children.
Go into this week with the knowledge
that resurrection will come,
even when it seems there is no tomorrow.
Be blessed and be a blessing,
with the courage to stand with those in need.

In the name of the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.
Amen.