



A Lenten Mosaic - Living In Grace Lent 2020

**Devotion for
Monday of Holy Week,
April 6, 2020**

In the Palm of His Hand By Nancy Williams Ellis

As I sit here in my kitchen on this beautiful Sunday morning, coffee in hand and newspapers yet to be read, my thoughts are focused on the significance of this day—Palm Sunday—the day which marks the beginning of Holy Week, the final week of Lent. I envision Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey, some people spreading their cloaks on the road, others cutting branches from the trees, and the crowd shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Ordinarily, I wouldn't be sitting here in my pajamas. I would be getting ready for church, where the procession of palms and the singing of hymns would mark the occasion. But these are not ordinary times, so we will not gather as a church body today. Instead, we will watch church services on television or stream them from our computer. COVID-19 has entered our lives and turned our world upside down and inside out. Depending on our perspective, we are either stuck at home or thankful, by the grace of God, to be alive and well in our little corner of the world. For far too many, neither is the case. Thousands of people are lying in hospitals with respirators keeping them alive, while more people than we could have ever imagined have succumbed to this virus. We've never experienced anything like this before, so we have questions: How many will die? Will I contract the virus? Will I lose loved ones, close friends, or church family? When will I see my grandchildren again? Will my children go back to school this year? When will this end? Will the world ever be the same again?

We have been talking a lot over the past several weeks about our hands. Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer. Do not put your hands on your face, especially near your eyes, nose, or mouth. As I ponder all that is going on in the world and the significance of Palm Sunday, I think of another kind of palm, the palm of God's hand. Isaiah 41:13 says, "I will hold you always in the palm of my hand," and in Isaiah 49:16, we read, "Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands." John 10:28 says, "No one will snatch them out of my hand," and in Psalm 139:10 we read, "Even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me." The Bible does not promise that we will not face hard times, but it does promise us God's strength and grace in these times. "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Hebrews 4:16.

On the walls inside the Auschwitz Concentration Camp are found these words: "I believe in the sun even when it is not shining. I believe in love, even when I am alone. I believe in God, even when he is silent." In the midst of tragic circumstances God is still present even when it is hard to see or perceive Him. God is love and you cannot quarantine love! Thanks be to God!

He's Got the Whole World in His Hands (African American Spiritual)

He's got the whole world in His hands.
He's got the wind and the rain in His hands.
He's got the whole world in His hands.
He's got the little tiny baby in His hands.
He's got the whole world in His hands.
He's got you and me, brother, in His hands.
He's got the whole world in His hands.
He's got you and me, sister, in His hands.
He's got the whole world in His hands.
He's got everybody here in His hands.
He's got the whole world in His hands.

A recording of the song can be found at
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUjhSzWd-gM>
You may have to copy and paste the link into your web browser.

Psalm 36:5-10

Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the clouds.

Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,
your judgments are like the great deep;
you save humans and animals alike, O Lord.

How precious is your steadfast love, O God!

All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings.
They feast on the abundance of your house,
and you give them drink from the river of your delights.

For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light.

O continue your steadfast love to those who know you,
and your salvation to the upright of heart!

Prayer (from Broadway Baptist Church, Louisville, KY)

On this Palm Sunday we come to you as people who sing with joy. But we also come to you as people who sometimes struggle. We want to shout, waving branches with excitement—but some days we can't. Some days the best we can do is put one foot in front of the other. We face times of illness, we have lost loved ones, we are not sure what the future holds. In those times of struggle, may we remember your peace and love given to us through your Son. On other days, we struggle as people who do wave palm branches, thinking that glory and fame are the goals for life. We want the things that are bigger and better, we want to be more popular, we want to be the best at work or school. But that is not who you have called us to be. You have called us to be table kickers. To speak out for the oppressed, to speak up for the underdog, to strive to increase love, not power. As we sing Hosannas today, may we remember to whom those words of honor were first sung. And may we seek to live lives that share the same kind of love Christ shared so long ago. On days when we can joyfully sing your praise, may we do so with uplifted voices. On days when we strive to put one foot in front of the other, may we feel your comfort and peace. We pray these things in the name of Christ, our rock and our redeemer. Amen