# Set Up

## Welcome to Christ Church/ introduce self / special welcome to guests / fill out card, etc., etc.

## Today we are doing something quite different. As Mike noted in this week’s letter, in previous years we’ve done a fairly traditional Palm Sunday service, but we’ve carried the message through Good Friday – that is, we’ve not just talked about Christ’s Triumphal entry, but also looked ahead through his visit to Temple, Last Supper, Garden of Gethsemane, Trial and Crucifixion. The joke is always that the service leads to whip lash. But we’ve done it in light of that fact that lots of people are going to miss everything that happens between this morning and next Sunday. And if we do not fill in a bit of what happens today, you go from Jesus riding in for the Triumphal Entry – when everything is good – right to the resurrection, when everything is good. And it’s never “not good.” It’s all happy. And while that’s the way some want the story told, that’s not the story. A lot happens between today and next Sunday. And so, in the past, we’ve incorporated a lot of that into this service.

## We are not doing that this year. We will move into the events of Thursday, but we are inviting you to join us for services on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday that correspond to what happened on each of those days. That’s a bit more work for you, but we believe it’s worth it. And today we get to have a bit more fun.

## Much of today’s message will be told by drama – which is aimed at the children who we have invited into the service.

## In the past lots of kids attend on Easter Sunday – for a service aimed at adults. So this year we are inviting all of the kids into the service this week, for a service that welcomes them. And we are encouraging them next week to attend our wonderful children’s programs.

## We are also doing this – having a drama geared a bit for children – because we know that lots of adults learn lots of things when they read kid’s books or watch kid’s programming. We expect a few clarifying “oh, so that’s what happened” moments for many of you.

## Well, that’s enough for now. Mike will be coming up at the end to the drama to help pull things together. All of what you will see – and what he will be talking about - require us to jump ahead in our study of Luke 19. I’m reading verses 28-40:

### 28 After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29 As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 30 “Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it.’”

### 32 Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. 33 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?”

### 34 They replied, “The Lord needs it.”

### 35 They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. 36 As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

### 37 When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

### 38 “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”[[b](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke+19&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25770b)]

### “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

### 39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”

### 40 “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

# Drama

# MJW remarks

## If we stick to the reporting format the drama set up, I’m one of the talking heads that comes on to try to explain: what just happened, why it matters and, more importantly, what is likely to happen next. Andrew has just announced, “we’re not moving towards anything anymore, we’re here.” That’s right. The Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem at the time of the Jewish Passover kicks off Holy Week, and Holy Week is the week to end all weeks. In a way few appreciate, everything in the Bible from Genesis 3 on has been building to this week – and in particular to this Friday.

## They certainly didn’t understand that at the time. At the time, Peter and Andrew, James and John – the rest of the apostles and all of the others following Christ, felt like everything was spinning out of control. Christ’s popularity was at its peak, but He was insisting on heading into Jerusalem for the Passover and Jerusalem was full of people committed to kill him.

## For over one thousand years the Jews had gathered to celebrate the way God had delivered them from Egyptian slavery. They had been oppressed. They had no rights. They believed they were God’s children and promised much better, but they had fallen under Egyptian dominance and reduced to nothing.

## But God had heard their cries and sent Moses to deliver them. And after 9 plagues designed to show God’s power, the angel of death had come to Egypt, claiming the life of every first born male. But God had passed over the homes of the Jews because they had sprinkled the blood of a young, innocent, perfect lamb over their doorposts.

## Every year they got to together to recreate that event and remind themselves of how God had freed them. It was their biggest holiday of the year. It was sort of a Christmas, July 4th, Memorial Day and Thanksgiving rolled into one. The patriotic pride was at a fever pitch. And at this point, that was dangerous because the Jews were oppressed again. This time it wasn’t the Egyptians it was the Romans.

## They wanted their freedom again. And they were looking for someone to unite and lead them. Jerusalem was a tinderbox just waiting for a match. Rome was committed to snuffing out any hint of trouble. To them that meant Jesus. He was the one people would likely follow.

## To the horror of his apostles, Jesus was walking right towards trouble. And his Triumphal Entry had put the Roman authorities on alert and then His trip to the Temple had put the Jewish authorities on alert. To Peter, James and John, danger was everywhere they looked.

# But they couldn’t see what was really happening – and how well this would end.

## To fully appreciate what God was doing you have to back up all the way to Genesis 3, where, right after sin entered the world, God promised to send “someone” to defeat evil.

## And you have to go to Genesis 12 and remind yourself that the “someone” would come through the bloodline of Abraham. The Hebrew Bible – our Old Testament – shows the long, improbable, remarkable winding road between Abraham and the nation of Israel. And we follow it up and down – learning all kinds of things about God and His plan. But – but! – it ends without resolution. It ends without the fulfillment of the promise made in Genesis 3. It points ahead to Jesus but ends before Jesus.

## The New Testament begins with Christ’s arrival as a child. He comes in weakness not power. I’m going to tie all of this together next week. For now let me say, the Bible is a book about Jesus. The Old Testament points forward DIAGRAM #1. The Gospels are about Jesus and the rest of the New Testament is pointing back to Jesus.

## More to the point, the Gospels lead up to Holy Week. DIAGRAM #2. Holy Week takes up one-third of Matthew, Mark and Luke, and one-half of the Gospel of John. One half of John’s Gospel recounts the events between Christ’s entry into Jerusalem and his resurrection from the grace seven days later.

## And Holy Week – DIAGRAM #3 – leads to the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ.

## It is the week to end all weeks. It is an incredibly, indescribably important series of days. It’s where it all comes together.

## It makes it clear that Jesus is not just a wise teacher – although He is that. He is the savior of the world. The Passover sacrifice.

# But I’m getting ahead of myself.

## As was already mentioned, in previous years we’ve covered a lot of the week in this weekend’s services. We are trying to do things a bit differently this year. We are trying to help you experience the events in real time. We are inviting you back for four very powerful services. Services designed to help you imagine a bit more of the tension, the excitement, the heartbreak and chaos, the darkness. Services designed to help you engage with God in a new way.

## On Thursday, at 7 PM at the Highland Park campus, we are hosting The Gathering, a theatrical recreation (with professional actors) of the Last Supper, retold in a contemporary setting. This is the night Jesus changed the Passover meal into Holy Communion or The Lord Supper. In the midst of repeating the ceremony that Jews had repeated for over a thousand years, he changed what was said to point to himself.

### This bread is my body which is given for you.

### This wine represents my blood, which is about to be poured out for you.

### You need me. You need what I am going to do. You need me to redeem you and to sustain you.

### You will want to do this over and over and over to focus on my sacrifice, because my sacrifice is what changes everything.

## On Friday, at 7 PM at the Lake Forest campus, we will have a Good Friday service.

### The sanctuary will be open between 1 and 3 for communion and quiet meditation.

### Friday evening there will gather to reflect on the last words of Christ on the cross. It will be different this year from what we’ve done in the past. But it will, as before, end in silence and darkness.

## On Saturday evening at both campuses – 5:30 here, the same time as our normal Saturday evening service, and 8 PM at HP – we will have an Easter Vigil. This is a service that starts in darkness but ends in light. It explores waiting and hope. It starts with the pain and horror of imagining that Christ’s death was the end of great moral reformer. That the Roman Empire had won again. That death and evil had won again. And then it begins to turn. We realize that the cross is not simply a vehicle of torture, humiliation and death, but of redemption, forgiveness and eternal life.

### This service – which will include communion – is new at the LF campus. We’ve had our normal Saturday night service on Easter before. This will not be that. In the past we’ve jumped ahead and said, “He is risen! Somewhere in the world it’s already Easter.” This service will try to capture the darkness that had overcome Christ’s followers after His death and before they were able to grasp and embrace the resurrection.

## And then on Easter we will celebrate the resurrection itself – the exclamation point on Christ’s life. God raises Jesus from the dead. The act that validates every claim he made. The event – surprising on the one hand, not so much on the other – that confirms that He is the God Man through whom we gain forgiveness and eternal life.

### There will be a sunrise service at Lake Forest Beach at 6:00.

### We will have identical services at LF at 7:30, 9 and 11 AM. The 01 services at 9:01 and 11:01. The 10 service at HP. And special Easter Lighthouse services for children at 9 & 11.

### Please, invite your friends to any of these services. And then come at the time that works for them. If they are not coming, we’d ask you to seriously consider attending the 7:30 AM service. There is always room at 7:30.

### Next week’s service really is a perfect one to invite friends to.

## The week to end all weeks has begun. Let me pray for us.