In the name of ✠ Jesus.

Today we celebrate Jesus' royal entry into Jerusalem. He is hailed our king, yet enters in lowly pomp, we sing. He enters on a humble foal of a donkey with palm branches and shouts of victory.

The proclamations are not premature. The outcome was not in doubt. It was foreordained. The Father sent His Son for this very purpose, *"not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"* (Matt. 20:28). It's why He was born of woman — to take on *"the form of a servant,"* and as a servant to humble *"himself … to the point of death, even death on a cross."* But from this death, Jesus would emerge again from the tomb victorious. Indeed, Paul says, it was *"for this reason"* that God *"highly exalted him"* … because of cross and death. The celebration of resurrection is because of the victory won on the cross.

It's why Jesus entered into Jerusalem: that *"the Son of Man [may] be delivered up to be crucified."* It's why He was betrayed, why He was arrested, why He was denied, why He was falsely accused, tried, and convicted, why He was mocked and scourged, why He was nailed to a tree, why He was killed. That He might win for us the victory. It was necessary, Jesus said. He had to drink the cup. *"[I]t must be so"* … "for us men and for our salvation" (Nicene Creed).

Jesus enters Holy Week to shouts of *"Hosanna,"* and we joined our voices to the crowds. We waved our palm branches. How exhilarating! But He didn't enter Jerusalem for our accolades; He entered in order to bring us out of the depths of our sin and depravity; He entered to endure them for us.

And so, the welcoming cheers turned to crazed rejection: *"Let him be crucified,"* so that Jesus might bear our sins and sorrows on his bloodied body to the cross. This is the sacrifice that takes away the sins of the world. Here on the cross is the forgiveness of sins earned. Here is the ransom price paid. Here is the just wrath of God for sin assuaged. Here was our salvation won.

This is why the cross, a cruel instrument of death, has become for us the symbol of our faith … because, by His cross, our Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed the world.

This is Holy week, and we follow Jesus into the depths of death and hell. But death and hell is not the end for Jesus; and it's not our end. We follow Jesus that we too might emerge with Him in triumph over them. We follow Jesus this week in seeming defeat, so that next Sunday, we might celebrate victory, resurrection victory.

Indeed, resurrection book ends Holy Week. *"The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign"* — the raising of Lazarus:

resurrection. And not satisfied with killing Jesus, the Jews at the end of our Passion reading today want Pilate to *"order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' …"*, that is, lest *"resurrection."*

For finally, resurrection brings Holy Week into focus. Not only suffering and death were necessary, Jesus had told His disciples, but also resurrection: *"on the third day [He would] be raised"* from the dead (Matt. 16:21). And John admits that the disciples didn't really understand or believe until Jesus had been *"raised from the dead"* (John 2:22).

Resurrection is our end, too — not death, but resurrection. It's what we've celebrated the last couple weeks as we've laid two Zion saints to rest. We celebrated a life of faith in Christ crucified and risen, and eternal life with Him, resurrection and life. God grant that, in this Holy Week and always, You may keep our eyes fixed on Jesus our King, who for our sake endured the cross, despising the shame, who rose again and reigns with You, and who will come again in glory to raise us to life and everlasting glory.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.