

Rev. Janet R. Doyle  
Elmer Presbyterian Church  
Palm Sunday  
Sunday, April 13, 2025  
Scripture: : John 12: 9-36  
Sermon: Hosanna: The Protector

On November 13, 2021, a twin-engine charter plane operated by Island Airways crashed on its way to Beaver Island, Michigan. An 11-year-old girl is the lone survivor of the Lake Michigan plane crash that claimed the lives of the girl's father and three others.

Mike Perdue's 11-year-old daughter was the crash's lone survivor. Laney Perdue sustained broken bones and other injuries. Emergency responders transported her to Helen DeVos Children's Hospital in Grand Rapids where she remained in the days after the fatal plane crash on Beaver Island.

Christie Perdue, Laney's mother, told CNN that she believes her husband may have saved their daughter by holding her tight and bracing before the crash impact. While Laney's memory of the crash was a bit hazy in the hospital, her mother said one thing she does recall is her dad hugging her.

"One of the last things she remembers is just being hugged really tight by dad, and Mike, if you knew him, gave the best, big bear hugs," Christie Perdue said. "In my heart of hearts, I know that he truly did save her, and he protected her," she added.

What an amazing story! This story was in our Lenten devotional book on the Fourth Sunday of Lent called "In the Arms of Jesus". This devotion really stuck out to me so much that my husband and I looked up the story on the internet. To think the love of the father saved the life of his daughter in this crash and everyone else died, including the father. Any parent or grandparent knows that kind of love for your

children that you would be willing to protect your child with your own life so that they would live.

Our Heavenly Father knows us and loves us that much that he sent Jesus into the world to protect us from eternal separation from him. Jesus went to the cross to take our place. It was the biggest bear hug you ever had.

Do you know someone that gives great hugs? Well, Jesus loves us so much that he came to give us the biggest bear hug we have ever known and because of that hug we are alive. Jesus came to protect us from death.

Psalm 46 says, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. ‘Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.’ The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.”

The greatest hymn by Martin Luther was *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*, which is based on Psalm 46. He wrote it during the darkest time of the Reformation and a difficult time in his own life. It was a time of widespread persecution from the Catholic Church. For the persecuted, no greater words were there to sing than:

**“A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;  
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing:  
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.”**

Martin Luther felt God’s protection upon him and his ministry over the years and God wants us to feel his protection in our life.

Many people in our scriptures felt God’s hand of protection upon their lives. Such as Abraham and Sarah, Moses, Joseph, Esther, Mary, Elizabeth, Peter, Paul and many more.

Jesus felt the hand of God upon his earthly life. Jesus Christ was born of the line of David. He was born of a virgin, through divine intervention. He was named, "Jesus" in accordance with the work He would do, "Save people from their sins".

Not only was the hand of God upon the earthly life of Jesus Christ at his birth, but also in his death. In the New Testament we see that Jesus knew that he would be delivered to the chief priests and scribes and condemned to death. He knew that he would be delivered over to the Gentiles to be mocked, scourged, and crucified. Commenting upon His death, Peter would later say that Jesus was "delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). In the gospel of John, Jesus constantly anticipated "His hour" (the hour of his death) (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23,27; 13:1; 17:1).

In the gospel of Luke, Jesus, Himself, described the events of His last days on earth as being "determined" (Luke 22:22). God's hand was upon Jesus at His baptism, a voice came from heaven to affirm Jesus' ministry, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (Matt. 3:17). At His temptation, it was the Spirit who led Him up to the wilderness to be tempted (Matt. 4:1). At His transfiguration, a voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him!" (Matt. 17:5).

We see God's protecting hand upon Jesus from the beginning of his life until his resurrection morning. God protected Jesus' life until the right time when he would surround the world with his open arms hugging us and holding us close to him from the cross to give us life.

A little boy would love to go play at the park with his father but would always say to his father, "Daddy, stay close by me, catch me if I fall!" No matter how many hours the boy would run around and play, the father would patiently stay close to him. Now and then the son would look over to make sure that his daddy is standing close by.

God stayed close to Jesus all his life and God stays close to you. He would never abandon you and will surely keep you in his care. You are always in the vision of God.

Today is Palm Sunday, or also called Passion Sunday because Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey entering his last week before Good Friday and his death on the cross.

The people were waiting for a King to rescue them from the oppression of the government and they thought Jesus was the one.

The city was buzzing. The word had gotten around. Jesus, the great teacher and healer was coming to Jerusalem, despite the danger from the Jewish leaders. Word was that he'd even been talking about death, predicting that he was going to be crucified, and saying that people had to be willing to take up their cross if they wanted to follow him. Yet at the same time he was still teaching and healing people he was still arguing with the Pharisees.

So when Jesus came to the Mount of Olives, overlooking Jerusalem, the crowds were ready. When he appeared at the gates of Jerusalem riding a donkey they got really excited. They took off their cloaks and threw them on the ground in front of him. Others cut Palm branches from the trees and spread them on the road. They started crying out "Hosanna". That is "God save us" and then they added "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" They clearly recognized that here was an important figure, someone to be revered.

There may have been other thoughts in their minds as well. They may well have been hoping for a showdown with the Romans.

Perhaps they thought that here at last was someone who'd oppose the Roman occupation. So they were excited. Notice how quickly their excitement fades. No sooner has Jesus entered Jerusalem, than we find him alone again with the twelve and returning to Bethany to spend the night. Their enthusiasm has died down and he's left on his own.

In Zechariah 9 we have a prophecy of the king arriving on a donkey: "Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'" It seems that Jesus is making a public claim to be that Messianic figure promised by Zechariah. It's as if he's saying, "Here's the King that God promised all those years before."

The King that Zechariah talks about is gentle and humble. He doesn't enter Jerusalem on a war horse or riding a chariot. He enters on a humble donkey, whose role is to serve, not to conquer. He carries with him his own authority, given to him by God, not by those he's defeated. And perhaps the key phrase here is that he comes to them righteous and having salvation. The salvation that Jesus the King will bring will be a salvation based on his righteousness, which he'll impart to those who have faith in him. It's a salvation that will come from his submission to death; from his being not a conquering King, but a Servant King— a King that came to protect us from death; a King that came to save us. The people failed to understand the nature of Jesus' Kingship, the significance of his humble entry to Jerusalem. Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, was the suffering servant who came to protect us from the world's darkness.

If our faith is in a Messiah who conquers through weakness, then there are going to be times when we too will be called to persevere in weakness. And there are going to be times when we'll have to wait patiently, like the first disciples, to see how God will bring about the salvation that we're longing for, even when on the surface it looks like nothing's happening.

So let's be encouraged to have confidence in this King who rides a donkey, to pray to God in the midst of our struggles, knowing that he understands, and that despite his appearance of weakness, he in fact has great power to save those who believe in him.

Let's continue to worship the God who emptied himself and took on human form, until he returns, when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess him to be Jesus Christ, the Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Hosanna, Save us! Protect us! Empower us to be your disciples to a world that needs our Father's bear hug to live!

In 2 Samuel 22:1-7 (NIV) it says:

“David sang to the LORD the words of this song when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. He said: "The LORD is my rock, my

fortress and my deliverer; My God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior.”

There's a reason that we call God Father. It's because He acts towards us as our earthly fathers should, not only do they love us and take care of us, but they protect us from evil and from those who seek to harm us.

Jesus gave us a glimpse of God's heart when He looked over Jerusalem and wept and cried out in Matthew 23:37 that He had longed to gather the children of Israel together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. Jesus wanted to protect His people, but they turned away and wouldn't let Him.

David knew this part of God's heart and here in 2 Samuel 22, as his days are ending and as he is pausing to reflect on the events of his life, David writes a Psalm of praise to remember and rejoice over how God had delivered him and protected him time and time again over the years of his life.

This is a good picture of what God does for us when we're in distress like David was. If we would only just cry out for help, God would hear our cries and move heaven and earth to deliver us from our enemies and protect us.

In fact, that's what the cross was all about. When we were held captive by sin and death, God launched an invasion on earth. God didn't send an army. He came Himself, and He went to the cross and suffered in our place to do what we were not strong enough to do. He came because He loved us and delighted in us and wanted to protect us and because He is our Father and that's what our Father does. God came in the form of Jesus to give us a big bear hug that would save us.