

Save Us Now!

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."

This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

***"Say to the Daughter of Zion,
'See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"***

The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Hosanna in the highest!"

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"

The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

Have you noticed how something meant to be a compliment can actually become an insult? In an old Andy Griffith episode, Aunt Bea went away for a while. Of course, Andy and his son Opie were not used to having her gone. She wasn't there to clean up the house, cook meals or do the dishes. After a few days the entire house was a mess. They figured Aunt Bea would be very upset so they quickly cleaned up the place. They talked to her on the phone and Andy meant to compliment her by saying they didn't even miss her, but she took it as an insult. She felt they didn't need her anymore. Andy picked up on that and right before she got home, they messed up the place real good. Of course she commented on how messy the place was, but that was a compliment. They needed her. That is why I am always torn when my wife leaves for the weekend. Do I keep the house clean or mess it up so she feels needed.

We have that on Palm Sunday. The crowds paid Jesus a real compliment. They sang hymns, cast palm branches and coats on the road before him cheered him on. They said all the right things. But what they meant as a compliment ended up being an insult. You see, when they chanted "Hosanna," they may not have known it but they were chanting Jesus' name. When Gabriel told Mary she would give birth to a son, she was to name him "Jesus." Jesus is the Greek word for the Hebrew "Joshua." Joshua means "he saves."

Hosanna and Joshua come from the same verb. Jesus means he saves us. Hosanna means, "Save us now." They were actually begging Jesus to save them with that word. Jesus did that. He saved them with the cross. But in the end they said, "No thanks. You are not the Savior we wanted." How about you or I? The best way we can compliment Jesus is to let Jesus do what he came to do. Let's cry out "hosanna." Ask him to save you now.

I. The perfect cry to Jesus our king.

Palm Sunday must have been exciting. If you had to pick a holiday today that best describes this scene what would it be? Thanksgiving? Christmas? I think the Fourth of July would be the best. This was a very patriotic time of the year for them. They were coming to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. It reminded them of how they had become an independent nation. God freed them from their slavery to the Egyptians and the Passover took them back to that freedom.

And Jesus only filled their heads with more national pride. They actually thought Jesus was going to make Israel great again. Unlike politicians who make long promises they can't keep, Jesus seemed different. He healed their diseases. He multiplied five loaves into a meal to feed thousands. And he came riding on a donkey. Often we think that a donkey was a sign of humility or lower class. I often said that Jesus deserved a chariot with a team of six white horses and that a donkey would be like riding a bicycle. But King David rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey. In those days a donkey was the limousine of the rich and famous. It was a sign of royalty or prestige. So this image of Jesus on a donkey invoked in their minds King David. In Mark's account of this story we are told the crowds chanted, "***Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David.***" This was their Fourth of July.

So, it should not surprise us that the people would quickly turn on Jesus when it became obvious he would not be a king like David. And they did just that, only worse. Within five days there would be near rioting and hatred and violence in Jerusalem. The people would not calm down until they arrested, tortured and killed Jesus. I am sure that many of those voices that chanted "Hosanna," later chanted, "Crucify him." By the end of the week Jesus' disciples will have abandoned him. By the end of the week Jesus will be dead. Why? Jesus wasn't the king they wanted.

For some in that crowd, they got caught up in visions of patriotism. It would be like us singing "A Mighty Fortress" at Reformation. For them the Passover was more a national holiday and not a picture of how the blood of another saves them.

They were only interested in a political leader who would give them pride, wealth and honor. There were some in the crowd who just got caught up in the moment and asked, "**Who is this?**" And most didn't know who Jesus was. "**The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."**

And so they shouted, "Hosanna," but they didn't pay attention to what they were saying. They were begging God to save them, and he was in the process of doing that. He sent Jesus to Jerusalem to suffer and die and take away the sins of the whole world. He was doing exactly what they asked. But later that week their response would be, "Nevermind."

We could celebrate this week like they did, going through the motions. Or we could actually sit back for a moment and absorb what this week is telling us. We could come Maundy Thursday because you haven't taken communion for while, or you can come to hear Jesus speak those words "given and shed for you ... for the forgiveness of sins." We could come Good Friday because the service is really cool, or we could come to stand at the foot of the cross and see the Lord of the universe dying for us. We could come to Easter because of the special music, or the breakfast, or because Easter along with Christmas are the two days everyone should go to church, or we could come to marvel at the power of Christ and his resurrection and for a moment see ourselves rising from the grave to eternal life.

The crowds chanted "Hosanna," but to them it was merely a word you sang once a year. We could speak the proper church words. We can utter our prayers. Or we can actually mean what we say. Hosanna is begging God to save us now. It means coming to him because we need saving. It means abandoning any hope that somehow you or I can sneak our way into heaven. It means confessing our sins, our many sins, and standing before God poor and spiritually bankrupt. And how does God answer our prayer? Jesus who is also known as Joshua which means "He Saves" died for you and me and for all. God saves us now.

The crowds were half right. They welcomed him as a king, but not the king they wanted. Thank God he came as the king we needed. And Hosanna, "Save Us Now," is the motto of his kingdom.

II. A perfect motto for his church.

Every nation has their motto or slogan that defines them. Everyone knows the motto of America even though it is in Latin: *E pluribus unum*. It means "from the many one." That is America. We are many people from all sorts of different places becoming one nation. We are the great melting pot of the world.

"Hosanna," "save us now," is the perfect motto of God's Church. It is who we are. It is who Jesus is. It is what we are all about. Many in that crowd were hoping for a kingdom like the one King David established. But that is not the kingdom they or anyone needs. As Jesus had to explain to Pilate, his kingdom is not of this world. Jesus' kingdom isn't a replacement for Rome or Greece or America. It isn't about international peace treaties. It isn't just for Jews or Romans or Gentiles. We don't need ambassadors in the United Nations. We don't want ambassadors there. His kingdom is about salvation. It is about people calling on God to save them now, Hosanna, and God saving them from sin, death and the devil through Jesus Christ. It is about preaching the Word, not using the sword.

We are excited to preach the good news to all the world, that salvation is free and already won by Christ, that everyone who believes will not perish, but have eternal life. Our kingdom is not of this world, but in heaven. So while some, even in Christian churches, are longing for some sort of Christian golden age or millennium here on earth, we look to heaven and see the true glory of this kingdom.

Hosanna. They may have chanted the word, but thank God you and I by faith know what that word means. "Save us now," and that is exactly what Jesus did. He didn't stop in Jerusalem when he came on Palm Sunday. He kept going to the hill carrying his cross. He kept going as he rose from the dead. He kept going as he rose to heaven to get it ready for us. He is still coming to take us there. So don't just say it, pray it. "Hosanna," and watch how God saves you. Amen.