

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Palm (Passion) Sunday C
April 10, 2022
John 12:12-19; Luke 23:1-56

Hosanna! King Jesus

So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" (John 12:13 ESV)

In the name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world,

Today makes you shake your head, doesn't it? One moment we hear of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, joyfully process into church singing "All Glory, Laud, and Honor", and then we hear of Jesus' suffering, crucifixion, death, and burial. One moment there is the crowd singing Jesus' praises, the next there's a crowd calling for His crucifixion. One moment there is unbridled joy and gladness, the next there is the horror of hatred and death. The contrast could almost give you whiplash. And yet, it is all a unified pageant of your salvation.

Those crowds praising Jesus as He entered Jerusalem shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" They recognized that Jesus was coming as a king and they wanted Him to save them. They realized that this one riding a donkey was coming as the Davidic King promised so long ago. He came humbly, not as the world's kings, not as a conqueror, not with an army or show of force. Yet, He did most certainly come to save – not from the Romans or other worldly enemies. No, He came to save from sin, from death, from the devil. He came to save people that they might live with Him forever. That's why there was such joy that day, though the crowd didn't know how truly they spoke.

But just a few days later and everything would be turned on its head. There would be an abundance of hatred and violence, especially on the part of the chief priests. The civil government officials, Pilate and Herod, found Jesus innocent of all charges brought against Him. They both found nothing in Him worthy of death. Yet, the furor of the chief priests would not allow Jesus to go free. They even asked for Barabbas, an insurrectionist and murderer, to be released in place of Jesus so that Jesus could die in Barabbas' place. Finally, succumbing to the their demands, Pilate gave Jesus over to be crucified. Crucified between two criminals, Jesus had truly taken His place with sinners. It looked like the One who had come to save needed saving Himself. Yet, in all of this, there was no denying it – Jesus was the King of the Jews. Pilate declared such in the sign over His head. This King wearing a crown of thorns was enthroned on a cross. His humility was on full display as He asked His heavenly Father to forgive those who were killing Him. There was darkness and the curtain in the temple was torn in two. Everything that happened lead the centurion to declare, "Certainly this man was innocent." There was much pain, despair, grief. It seemed the crowd's hope of salvation had been utterly dashed. What would they do now?

Beloved, our lives may seem like this at times. A moment of unbounded joy and gladness turns to sorrow, grief, and shame. We rejoice because Jesus has come to us, still in humility, not on a donkey, but in Word, water, bread, and wine. There is unbounded joy in the Divine Service as we receive our King. The same One who entered Jerusalem, the same One who suffered persecution and hatred and died on the cross, is the same one who comes to us today. And we pray for salvation and deliverance, as we shout, or sing, our hosannas. And He answers that prayer as He grants us mercy beyond belief. He prays for our forgiveness that we might not perish eternally. He is here in the flesh as He gives us His very body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins and the new life that comes with it.

And then there is the flip side. Too often we see the hatred and violence against us and against others. Too often we hear the cries to release the wicked and to kill, or cancel, those who are godly. We ourselves may hold grudges, hating another person, wishing them ill. We may live in the darkness of impenitence, unbelief, and despair. Faith and the Holy Spirit have departed because we would rather remain in and cling to our sinful thoughts, words, and deeds. We want nothing to do with Christ unless it's on our terms.

Yet, this Jesus, the One riding the donkey, the One bleeding, dying, comes to us calling us to repentance. He weeps when we don't realize our sin, our need for Him, and the salvation He comes to bring. He comes to save us from sin and its wages. He comes to deliver us from death and damnation. And He does it through His passion, His suffering, His death, His burial, His rest on the Sabbath, which leads to His resurrection. But that's for another time.

God bless your Palm Sunday celebration and your Holy Week observances as you celebrate your King who comes to you with salvation and as you prepare to celebrate Christ's resurrection. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener