

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church  
Shobonier, Illinois  
Palm Sunday A  
April 2, 2023  
John 12:12-19

Hosanna!

The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 13 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 12:12-13 ESV)

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

If there's one word that really rings out on Palm Sunday, it's "Hosanna." It's what the people cried as Jesus entered Jerusalem. It's certainly a word of acclamation and praise. But what does it mean? Why would the crowds be saying it? Well, it means, "Save now." It comes from Psalm 118:25 which says, "Save us, we pray, O Lord!" It is a cry for salvation.

The crowds were shouting, "Hosanna!", because they believed that Jesus is coming to save them, to deliver them. They are confessing that He is the coming Messiah, sent by God to be the new and great king from the line of David, to deliver Israel from all her foes.

Yet, they probably didn't rightly understand what kind of salvation Jesus had come to bring, or what they needed saving from. And they certainly didn't know how that salvation would be accomplished. After all, Jesus is much more than just a new national king, who will restore Israel to her glory days, bringing peace and prosperity, and kicking the Romans out of town.

And, what about us? Wouldn't we be happy with a religion that validates us as we are, affirms us, celebrates us, makes us comfortable, makes us feel good about ourselves. Wouldn't we gladly welcome a king who could boost our economy, lower our gas prices,

put an end to persecutions, perverted and unjust government actions, and generally make our lives better. That kind of king would get lots of hosannas and look real good in the opinion polls.

But Jesus comes with a bigger and better salvation than that. He's going to deal with a bigger problem, the underlying problem that produces all the other problems—the ones we see and the ones we don't see or realize or admit. And that big problem is sin, our sin. And not just the sins of those other people, the bad people, the immoral people, the people we look down upon. But our own sins, the sins of us good and respectable people, God's people, whether we're talking temple-going Israelites or church-going Lutherans. Our sins—that's what we need a deliverer for, a Savior. "Save us, we pray, O Lord!" "Hosanna!"

And here's where Jesus fits the bill. In fact, His very name means, "Savior." Remember that the angel told Mary, "And you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." The name "Jesus" is related to the same Hebrew word as "Hosanna." So Jesus' name is truly "The Lord saves." He is the answer to our prayer, "Save us, we pray, O Lord!"

Jesus rides into Jerusalem to do just that. But how He does it is a great surprise. If the word of the day on Palm Sunday is "Hosanna!", the word of the day on Friday will be "Crucify!" Another day, another crowd, a quite different mood, and a quite different reception. Instead of an enthusiastic "Hosanna to the Son of David," there will be a mocking "Hail, King of the Jews!" Instead of palm branches, a crown of thorns and a wooden cross. No longer is the prayer and the praise, "Save us, we pray, O Lord!" "Hosanna!" On Friday it will be mockery and insult: "Save yourself, and come down from the cross!" "He saved others; he cannot save himself."

No, He cannot save Himself. Because that is how, ironically, He will save others. That's how He saves you and me. Jesus is your Savior precisely by not saving Himself from this death He most assuredly does not deserve. Jesus saves you from your sins by dying for them, in your place. This is the bigger and better salvation that He brings. You needed a Savior to deliver you from yourselves, to deliver you from the death and judgment you earned by your sins

against God. God sends that deliverer, His only Son come from heaven, the only one who can do the job, the only one whose sinless life and holy blood are sufficient to cover the sins of the whole world.

That is the strange way, the surprising way, that our conquering hero has conquered death for us. By His all-atoning death, Christ Jesus has won for us forgiveness for all our sins, and, with that forgiveness, life that comes out of the tomb – at Easter, when He comes out of His own tomb, and at the Last Day, when He comes again and empties out our tombs and raises us up to life everlasting. So don't sell Jesus short! His salvation is bigger than you can possibly imagine! Our hosannas now are just not big enough! But we'll have a whole eternity to sing them to their fullest!

Now, we will sing our hosannas in a few minutes when we sing the Sanctus, "Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" We will sing those hosannas right as Jesus rides into this temple today, to give us His body and blood in the Sacrament. Again, He comes in humble, lowly fashion. And now He comes having salvation to bestow. In the Blessed Sacrament, our blessed Lord gives us His gift of the sign and seal of salvation in His body and blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.

"Hosanna!" "Save us, we pray, O Lord!" The Lord does exactly that – in this humble king riding into Jerusalem and coming to us now in this service. If "Hosanna!" is the word of the day for Palm Sunday, then so is "Jesus." Jesus is God's answer to our "Hosanna!" And so our prayer for salvation becomes also our song of praise: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" Amen.

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

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener