

Palm Sunday Gospel – Matthew 21:1-11.

1 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, 2 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. 3 If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." 4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: 5 "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.' " 6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. 7 They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. 8 A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 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!" 10 When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" 11 The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

[Kids' message – invite kids up to front, set palm branch in front of each child]

Would you help me tell the story of Palm Sunday? The crowds waved palm branches the day Jesus rode into Jerusalem. You will too. Will you shout a special word of praise that the people used that day? Whenever I say **“the shout was heard,”** you let out a: **“Hosanna!”** Let's try it...

But that's not all! Whenever I say, **“which means,”** you shout: **“Save us!”** Try it with me...

Now both of those together... You've got it. Here we go.

[Pull hand down palm stem to pull off leaves, make motion with 2 fingers like walking along the branch-path.]

Jesus was ready to enter Jerusalem. He mounted the donkey. Along the way, at a bend in the road (**bend palm branch**), THE SHOUT WAS HEARD **“Hosanna!”**, WHICH MEANS **“Save us!”**

As Jesus rode, the people laid out their cloaks and branches like a royal carpet. Along the way at a bend in the road (**bend palm branch again**), THE SHOUT WAS HEARD **“Hosanna!”**, WHICH MEANS **“Save us!”**

As Jesus rode, the people waved palm branches. Along the way at a bend in the road (**bend palm branch again**), THE SHOUT WAS HEARD **“Hosanna!”**, WHICH MEANS **“Save us!”**

Praise the Father in heaven above –

who sent us Jesus – His Son – to give us his love (**Bend palm branch; hold it up / wave it**)

Wave your branches, hold them up high. Sing your praises right up to the sky

As today THE SHOUT is HEARD **“Hosanna!”**, WHICH MEANS **“Save us!”**

[Fold palm branch as needed, to hold the cross shape, while telling...] The reason Jesus entered Jerusalem was for you, and for me, and for each person in the world who ever has lived and who ever will live. He knew we had something terribly wrong with us: sin. Sin means we think, say, and do things that are bad. God knows all the times we've done what is wrong. Jesus knew that there can be no bad, no evil, in Heaven. He wants each one of us to be in Heaven. So he planned to take away our sins. He knew he would have to be punished for them in our place, even though he himself had never done anything wrong. But he was willing to do that. That's how much He loves us! Jesus went to the cross, so that we would never have to suffer the punishment of hell. So you see: Jesus' trip on Palm Sunday led right up to his trip

[holding up palm cross] to His suffering, to his death on Good Friday. And God gives forgiveness of sins & life forever in heaven to all who trust in Jesus as the One who saves us from all our sin. It is good when today the shout is heard **Hosanna!** [Kids return to seat.]

In Matthew 21 vs.14-17 we're now at Monday of Holy Week. You'll hear very quickly the carryover from Palm Sunday. Listen for another connection. **Read vs.14-17.**

14 *The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them.* **15** *But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant.* **16** *"Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, " 'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise'?"* **17** *And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.*

If you talk to people today about Jesus, many will agree that he was a very eloquent, compassionate teacher who had many wise things to say. And it was terrible how his life on this earth ended, when he had done so much good. But they might conclude: "Beyond that, I don't know what to think of Jesus."

"I do believe he lived on this earth," someone might say. "But who is to say He is the Way to heaven, and no other way will do?" Throwing their hands up in the air, the person might say, "There are so many different religions in this world. If only I had a sign directly from God. . . . then I'd know who to believe. If only I could hear God speak the answer... then I'd know what to believe."

Sorting this out was something the people of Jesus' day were doing too. Listen. Over in John ch.10 we hear: "*The Jews gathered around Jesus saying, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.'* Jesus answered, '*I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me...*'" (vs.24-25).

And so we come to this Monday of Holy week. Vs.14 - "*The blind and the lame came to Jesus at the temple, and he healed them.*" Matthew alone records how Jesus performed miracles in the temple. He also is the only one to note the children shouting their "hosannas" in the temple area, the day after Jesus' big welcome.

The children were right.

These miracles are one instance out of the many where Jesus gave such signs. And the children in the temple are led to the right conclusion about Jesus. So they call it out: "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

The "children" specifically mentioned here are boys. You might think back to earlier in Jesus' life when he made the trip to Jerusalem for the Passover feast at age 12. Many 12-year-old boys and older would undoubtedly have been in attendance at the Passover week festivities with their fathers. By the age of 12 they had reached a benchmark, which was recognized in that day, in their study of the Scriptures. Maybe we'd compare it to our confirmation. They had been given a thorough grounding in what God's Word said.

Isn't this a powerful thing then when we hear...? These children – boys - were shouting in the temple area, "*Hosanna to the Son of David!*" I don't know exactly what the boys back then were like at age 12. But this sight startles – even shocks – me, knowing what I was like at that age. Boys that age putting themselves out there like that? Usually age 12, at least these days, means... "I'm going to try to sit back - the last thing I really want to do is draw attention to myself."

But something powerful had happened. God led them to put together what they had been learning in their Scripture study, along with what they were now seeing.

It's all simple & clear enough for children to understand. Jesus is healing people of their life-crippling ailments. "We should rejoice!" Jesus gives evidence of who he is. "We'll acknowledge & proclaim it: You are the Son of David."

Now we modern day hearers might not get immediately what's so special about them calling Jesus "the Son of David." But the Jewish people of that day – gathered to the temple courts this Monday of their Passover celebration – understand instantly. This is saying... "You are the promised Messiah – the Savior!"

- 2 Samuel 7 records when David was promised a descendant – a son – who would rule over kingdom forever (vs.13,16).
- The Lord repeats this promise of this One's forever kingdom throughout the Psalms (Psalm 89,132).
- In Isaiah 55 this promised son of David is a witness to the peoples of the world. There the Lord offers the water of life and food that bring life for our souls – all without cost to us. It's all grace! God's blessings are brought as gifts through this One.
- The promise in Isaiah 9 of the "Child born" to us who is "Mighty God & Prince of Peace" goes on to say: "He will reign on David's throne from that time on and forever." And so this Son of David is also so clearly true God, Mighty God, eternal God... and the bringer of our Peace.
- God laid out what to look for in the prophecies. "Your God will come ... he will come to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened... then will the lame leap like deer" (Isaiah 35). And Mathew records: "the blind and the lame came to Jesus at the temple, and he healed them." When the children call out "Hosanna to the Son of David," they are shouting: we now see teaching, healing, living and breathing in front of us the One sent to save us.

So picture Justin, Simeon, Austin, Sergio and Jacob calling out such news to us... "Hosanna to the Son of David!" You see, they know Jesus is the One who came to gift them life with him forever. In the water of baptism, God brought them washing for their souls & citizenship in His Kingdom when He graciously placed His name on them. They have the comfort that Jesus is always watching over them in their lives. He reigns. They know His assurance that he will never leave them nor forsake them. He is the source of their peace. And he is waiting to welcome them into the rooms he has prepared in Heaven.

Yet there are many opposing forces that gather against them - and against the rest of us who trust in Jesus to save us, just like the opposing forces that immediately confronted those boys so long ago.

Offering of praise is met with... raising of objection.

Pride clouds. Self-interest blocks. Blatant denial. Unbelief. That's what happens when other interests negate what is so clear & simple. Grown men refuse to see a truth that God has made clear enough for children to see and to tell.

And so the chief priests and teachers march to Jesus with self-righteous, blind indignation: "This is out of order!" Jesus directs the elders to learn from children. He uses the words of Psalm 8:2. He responds to their objections with God's Word, which overrules them.

Jesus gives here a clear witness to who he is, and this for the benefit of his people. God alone deserves the praise offered this day. God the Son is in the temple this Monday of Holy Week. You see: God had come to save his people, just as he promised!

And it's all right here. Jesus tells us. The signs are here that verify - just as they were for those boys, and for the people, so long ago. Jesus is the King of Heaven. And HE is the ONE who saves. He is the only Way, the Truth, the Life.

The thing that makes us sad on this day, as we reflect on this scene and these events, is an awareness: objections don't just arise from people of the world. God hears them from the lips of his own people (motioning to congregation & self). I'm not going to get to every objection you or I have ever thought, but some are pretty common:

We get tempted to dismiss what's in front of us (motion to Bible) and to long for or expect more: perhaps a "more glorious" Savior who will make life easier for us right now, today. "That would sure make it easier to answer friends when I bring up Jesus, and they shoot me a look that says: 'What are you thinking, believing that?' 'See!', I'd be able to say, 'Jesus is real, and I'm not a fool for believing in Him! Look how well everything is going in my life!'"

When we get tempted to look to our own ideas or emotions of what we want God to do, see it for what it is: self-interest - weakness. I mean face it: to feel ridicule and face rejection is tough on us.

If that doesn't sound like you, dig down a little deeper: How often does God not fit your reason/your simple logic? We get tempted to impose our ideas onto God: as if we know the topic of "fairness & tolerance" or the "laws of science" better than him.

How often has God not quite fit your preconceived ideas of what a particular teaching/truth ought to be? None of us like to hear that we're wrong. But we have been.

Jesus is our remedy. He saves us! He didn't come to carry out his rescue mission by commanding an army of angels to take care of the problem of our sin. That would never fix our souls. He comes alone, the lone warrior, riding a donkey into town. For you He does this... your king comes for you! He comes bringing salvation - for you! He brings salvation by going to his cross. His trip on Palm Sunday led right up to his death on Friday... and Easter just beyond that.

For a final word... Think of what was ahead for these children who shouted Jesus' praise in the temple courts this Monday of Holy Week. These boys would see some terrible things in their lifetime. In the months and years after Jesus' Resurrection, the Sanhedrin would try to root out the tender shoot and would try to snuff out the flame that was the fledgling New Testament Church. In 70 AD the Romans would come in and crush Jerusalem, tearing stone from stone and taking a tremendous death toll.

Looking back, we see that going forward from Palm Sunday: forces that would challenge the believers in Jesus were many.

Looking ahead from Palm Sunday today: we would be blind not to see the forces lined up to challenge our faith in Jesus, to challenge the faith of these little ones who have shouted His praise today in the "courts" of this building.

So as we go forward from this Palm Sunday: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." - Colossians ch.3

These next days give us a great opportunity to do that very thing. May the Lord bless the remainder of your Holy Week worship - both here and in your home - as you hear and take to heart His wonderful Word! Amen!