

## **Hosanna!**

John 12:12-19

We don't make much of the church calendar here, but one week in that calendar which marks the important events in Jesus' life and ministry is well worth noting—it is called Palm Sunday. It's the Sunday before Jesus was raised from the dead. It is the day he entered Jerusalem, often called the triumphal entry. Jesus came to the place where he would be crucified. He came to the place where his earthly ministry would come to a great climax, and then come to an end. And he entered Jerusalem to the praise and adoration of the people. Rightly so, though sadly those same people who would cry out, "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!,'" would cry out just five days later, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" We'll come to that in John 19, when Jesus was presented to the crowd by Pilate, "wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe." Then it was "Crucify him, crucify him."

But at first, here in John 12, they honored him. They came to the Passover feast and they gave honor to Jesus. There were a lot of people here, as the Pharisees observation is recorded in verse 19, "Look, the world has gone after Him!" The church historian Josephus calculates that there were nearly three million people gathered on such occasions, giving meaning to that hyperbole. And that huge group showed their honor by lining the streets for him with palm branches. It's not quite the red carpet, but that's the idea. It's the white runner rolled down the aisle before a bride enters on her wedding day. And likely even more practical here, in an attempt to keep Jesus' feet from getting dirty.

But the point is honor! The palm branches were often carried by processions attending kings or victorious generals on public occasions, much like the ticker-tape parades of our day. The

palm branch was a symbol of victory and the peace which came as a consequence of such victory.

v.12-13

A little more detail in Matthew's gospel,

Mat. 21:8 "And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' Hosanna in the highest!" 10 And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?" 11 So the multitudes said, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee."

Jesus' time had come! The time was at hand. And that's different from what has gone before, isn't it?

John 7:6 "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready...8 You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come."

But in John 12, with the entry into Jerusalem, his time had fully come. No more slipping away from the crowds in secret. The time has come when he would willingly and voluntarily lay down his own life for the sins of his people. His time had come, so he marched into town to offer himself as the atoning sacrifice, at the time he determined, at the time God the Father determined before the creation of the world.

The Jews would likely be noting that the 70 weeks of Daniel's prophecy were coming to an end, that is, 70 weeks of years, which is 70 times 7, or 490 years. They were nearing completion, and at the end of that 69th week, the Messiah would come and would be cut off, the Messiah who would come to restore and

rebuild Jerusalem. Messiah the Prince, as he is called in Daniel 9, or Messiah the King.

The time had come! And in the fullness of that time, as he came in the open to be received in the open, the message couldn't be any plainer or clearer. It was the message of salvation. And the response of the crowds was praise for that salvation.

## **I. PRAISE FOR THE SALVATION WHICH GOD PROVIDES.**

That's what it is all about. And that's still what it is all about Salvation. Redemption. The forgiveness of sins.

Too often, too easily, we lose that focus. We focus on secondary matters. Or matters of third importance. Or less, even no importance. The church can lose that focus too, and get all wrapped up in matters of politics. Or social justice. Or social ministry, caring primarily, or even only, for earthly physical needs. But the focus here is upon the salvation which God provides. And that is the subject of genuine and devoted praise.

It's actually a fun phrase, because it's time for another Hebrew lesson. One of these days I'm going to count up how many Hebrew words you actually know, because they come into the English language unchanged. Look at verse 13. "Hosanna."

Now, that's a quote from Psalm 118. Look back there with me, Ps. 118:25 "Save now, I pray, O Lord; O Lord, I pray, send now prosperity. 26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We have blessed you from the house of the Lord."

That's a good translation, but where is the "Hosanna"? The NASB doesn't help any either,

Ps. 118:25 "O Lord, do save, we beseech You; O Lord, we beseech You, do send prosperity!"

And the ESV,

Ps. 118:25 "Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success!"

No Hosanna to be found! So let's go back to the Hebrew. There is a Hebrew verb to save, followed by the adverb "now." So its just, "Save now," with some urgency in the words. And when you put those two Hebrew words together, guess what you get, "Hosanna." And those two words are combined in the Greek of the gospel writers. Hosanna. Save now!

It is,

### **A. A plea for salvation.**

They wanted to see the salvation which God had promised, the salvation which God would provide. They wanted to see the Messiah whom God had promised, and there was plenty of evidence by this time that Jesus was that Messiah, the Christ.

But this isn't just a plea! The plea actually becomes a word of praise, and that's the significance of the Greek word Hosanna. This is a song of praise. These are words of worship, as the pleading for salvation is united to the praise of those who have come to enjoy that salvation.

That's what it should be for us. Not just words, not just a fascinating Hebrew word-study, not just a tradition that is imitated on Palm Sunday. But real, genuine praise. Hosanna!

Let that praise be yours today! Whatever the circumstances of your life might be, whatever the distractions, even in this very moment. Whatever the trials and struggles, whatever the joys and delights of your life. Let this simple and straightforward word be on your lips and in your heart as you worship the Lord Jesus today. "Hosanna."

If God has saved you, if you have trusted in Jesus for your salvation and accepted the promise of the gospel that your sins will be forgiven, through faith in Jesus and not through works that you have accomplished, then praise God for that salvation with all of your heart and with all of your soul. Hosanna.

The praise given to Jesus goes on.

v.13 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'

Psalm 118:26 "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We have blessed you from the house of the Lord. 27 God is the Lord, And He has given us light; Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar. 28 You are my God, and I will praise You; You are my God, I will exalt You. 29 Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever."

Pure, unadulterated praise. "Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever." And what is the greatest expression of his mercy? The Messiah would come, "in the name of the Lord." Jesus came, "in the name of the Lord." He was, and is, the anointed Messiah. And so his coming is nothing less than God,

### **B. Fulfilling the promise of salvation.**

Blessed is he! That's praise, praise for the salvation which God provides. And again, that is praise that should fill us and consume us today! Jesus has come, just as God promised.

That praise is echoed in the words of Paul,

Gal. 4:4 "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba,

Father!" 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

Praise God for fulfilling that promise of salvation, a promise he first made known right after the original sin of Adam and Eve. Even as he inflicted the curse of death, separating man from God because of our sin, even as he pronounced that judgment, he promised salvation, as he spoke to the serpent,

Gen. 3:15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

He shall bruise your head! The seed of the woman would crush the head of the seed of the serpent. Jesus wins! Salvation is promised, redemption is proclaimed, and the covenant promise of God is made clear. He will provide the savior, the seed of the woman. God would accomplish the salvation of his people. He promised, and he kept his promise. "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

And one more thing. This savior is a king. The King of Israel, verse 13. He is,

### **C. The savior king.**

This is what God declares about that king,

Ps. 2:6 "Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion."

And here is where the promise of the gospel is so magnificent—that king is also God's son!

Ps.2:7 "I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' "

Jesus is King. Jesus the savior is Jesus the King! And it is he whom we worship today and everyday! So put aside everything that so easily distracts you this morning. Put aside even everything so troubles you or distresses you, just for a moment. And join together to sing this marvelous song, “Hosanna! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ The King of Israel!”

The story of Palm Sunday continues. I expect you are familiar with it. It has to do with a donkey.

v.14-15

Those are really words of encouragement, confidence.

## **II. CONFIDENCE IN THE SALVATION WHICH GOD PROVIDES.**

The focus goes back to the promise of a king.

### **A. God promised the coming of the king.**

And that is the encouragement. So “fear not!”

v.15

Your king is coming. We can compare this triumphal entry with the triumphant acclaim which Jesus would later receive in the heavenly realms, for we read in,

Rev. 7:9 “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’ 11 All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying: “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

And the prophecy from Psalm 118 is no less triumphant.

Remember the context for that cry, “Hosanna.”

Ps. 118:22 The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. 23 This was the LORD'S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. 24 This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.”

Everything about this is triumphant. Nothing at all is tragic. Jesus is not a victim, but a victor. Not passive and compelled submission to the sinful actions of men, but sovereign authority to determine and declare his own triumph. And at this point the crowds were proclaiming that triumph.

But notice something really, really important. It’s not something the crowd would have been expecting as they waited for their king. It’s not something you immediately associate with a king, but you should, at least for a good king. And that is,

### **B. The humility of the king.**

King Jesus exercised his reign as king with humility. He exercised his reign, for sure! He came rightly identified as king. But he remained humble. And his humility was made obvious in an outward and external sort of way—he rode on a donkey.

That royal humility is never more plainly described than in these words which John quotes from,

Zechariah 9:9 “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey. 10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be ‘from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.”

Rejoice, daughter of Zion! Rejoice, daughter of Jerusalem. And who are those daughters? In the spiritual kingdom established by Jesus Christ, they are the children of God, those who believe in Jesus Christ. It is spiritual Zion, spiritual Jerusalem, that makes up the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But that king did something amazing. That divine king did something unimaginable to the modern mind. He didn't demand his rights as king. Instead, as we read in,

Phil. 2:5 "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."

There is an easy way to explain those words. It is not that Jesus emptied himself of his deity or divine nature. It is not that Jesus, in any way whatsoever, ceased to be God or was even diminished in the least bit in his deity. But that he didn't demand his rights as God. Instead of demanding his rights, he took "the form of a bondservant, ... coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death."

And it was in him, in that humble servant, that God would reveal his authority to rule over all men. For as Philippians continues,

Phil.2:9 "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of

God the Father."

He humbled himself. That's how he accomplished your salvation, and that is what gives you confidence and security in your salvation.

Is. 53:3 "He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth."

He humbled himself. He rode on a donkey. He became obedient to the point of death. And that is the gospel. That is the promise of salvation. And in that is your confidence and your assurance. And for that reason, we gather here today to worship him.

It is also a humility we are called to imitate. It is a work of God in us that God intends to accomplish, our humility. Your humility. My humility. There is no room in the Christian life for pride, and no room for pride in our assembly of worship. There is no room for pride as we join ourselves together as a church, no room for pride as we witness the gospel to the world in which we live.

As we end, and somewhat more quickly, what do we see in terms of a response to Jesus? What are the,

### **III. THE RESPONSES TO THE SALVATION WHICH GOD PROVIDES.**

Let's start with the negative.

#### **A. Rejection.**

v.19

Actual politics aside, that seems like the opponents today of our president, trying in seemingly every way possible to make him more unpopular. And they just seem to fail in every attempt. No matter what happens, whatever the Special Counsel does, whatever the media write or print, or whatever allegations are made against him, his popularity seems to hold steady and even grow a little bit.

v.19

Obviously, the self-righteous hypocrites of the Pharisees had no intention of honoring Jesus as king. They simply rejected him outright. Then there was,

#### **B. Uncertainty.**

And this is how his disciples are described. But as John writes this gospel, he gives us the reminder that their uncertainty became real faith. But he doesn't hide from their initial uncertainty.

v.16

Notice John's emphasis upon what was written, the written record of Jesus. In other words, the Bible. And John makes it perfectly plain his own purpose in writing about Jesus, adding to that written record,

John 20:30 "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His

name."

Let me urge you this morning to think in those terms as well, "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." That's what it's all about. Hosanna! Lord, save you!

That's our prayer, isn't it? It's my prayer for you, even as I preach. "Save now, I pray, O Lord." Or in a single word, Hosanna. And that is the subject of our praise, as well. Hosanna!

Look, finally, at the,

#### **C. Witnesses of God's power.**

v.17-18

We are to join that crowd of witnesses, for we, too, have seen a resurrection—Jesus' own resurrection. We have seen his power as it is revealed in this great book of the Gospel of John.

The Lord has provided salvation, just as he promised. And that is the gospel we proclaim. So,

Zech. 9:9 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey. 10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be 'from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.'"

And we respond in praise to him. "Hosanna."