

Hosanna

Acts 4:1-12

Psalm 118 assumes a very prominent role in its references in the New Testament. I began our worship this morning with one of them,

John 12:12 The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!” 14 Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: 15 “Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey’s colt.”

That second reference comes from Zechariah 9:9, but the first reference is from Psalm 118, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!” And the timing of that event corresponds to this very day as the Sunday before Easter Sunday, the Sunday before Jesus’ resurrection, the Sunday when Jesus rode triumphantly into Jerusalem. This day is called by many Palm Sunday because of the response of honor which Jesus received that day on that great triumphal entry. Again,

John 12:12 “The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: ‘Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’”

Matthew gives us this account of that first Palm Sunday.

Mat. 21:7 “They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. 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!”

Hosanna is one of those many Hebrew that you all know, though you might not know that you know it. Going back to Psalm 118, which John is quoting, we read,

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!”

The English words, “Save now, I pray, O Lord,” are, in the original language, “Hosanna, Jehovah.” “O Lord, save now!” And that Psalm continues with the very familiar words,

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.”

Save now, O Lord! For this is the day of salvation! The day is today. “This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.” And in Acts 4, that is exactly the reference and the context to which we come today. What a day of salvation it was. It was the day of Pentecost, the day when God poured out his spirit in its fullness upon his New Testament church. It was a day when 3000 souls were added to their number. The number 5000 is used in our text today. So, “This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.”

But Peter quotes Psalm 118 to note that great obstacle to salvation; indeed, the great stumbling block. So Luke records for us in our text in Acts 4 not the reference to Hosanna, but the reference to the stumbling block.

v.11 “This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.”

That's Psalm 118. And that's Jesus. He is the stone which the builders rejected! He is the stumbling block of the gospel.

I. JESUS THE STUMBLING BLOCK.

You may already be thinking about the reference in,

1 Cor. 1:20 "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

The word for stumbling block comes into the English language as scandal, literally meaning an offense, an objection so severe that is offensive. Jesus is that offense! Peter puts it this way in,

1 Peter 2:7 "Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone," 8 and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed."

A rock of offense! A stumbling block. That's Jesus, that's the gospel of Christ crucified—it is a stumbling block. And we know exactly what that offense is. In Galatians 5:11, Paul calls it "the offense of the cross." But the offense, the stumbling block caused by the cross, is not simply that Jesus died, for that is not all to which the phrase "the offense of the cross" refers. Rather, the offense, the stumbling block for those who do not and will believe, is the offense of the resurrection from the dead! The offense of

the cross is that the death was not victorious—Jesus did not remain dead! In Acts 4, Peter makes that offense clear. It is...

A. The offense of the resurrection.

v.1-3

That's why they were so upset, especially the Sadducees, who were known specifically for their denial of the resurrection. Everyone was upset, scandalized, offended because the apostles "taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead." Verse 2 of our text this morning.

That's the offense of the gospel, the resurrection, that Jesus was raised from the dead! That's the offense of the gospel which they could not overcome in their unbelief. That is the stumbling block, that Jesus is alive, that he rose from the dead. And, to broaden that sense of offense, Peter emphasizes in Acts 4,

B. The offense of supernatural power.

So we read,

v.5. "And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, 6 as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"

By what power? By what authority? In whose name? Their offense is obvious, for the obvious reality is a claim to power that exceeds their own. The healing of this man born lame wasn't accomplished by the authority or power of the priests, or the temple rulers, or the Sadducees, not by the rulers, elders and scribes, nor by the high priest. They were offended at Peter's display of divine power to heal the man born lame, because it was

a challenge and a threat to their own power and status.

Peter answers them directly. By whose power did he heal the man? By whose power? That's an easy question to answer.

v.10 "...let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole."

By whose power? By the power of...

II. JESUS THE MESSIAH.

"...by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." Remember that Christ is the Greek word for the Hebrew "Messiah." The anointed one, the one anointed by God. And there is no greater title for Jesus in all of Scripture, no more comprehensive identification of his identity and his office than that of messiah. The Christ.

v.10 "...let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole."

I should not at this point that many did believe. I am focusing mostly upon the offense of the gospel and the rejection of Jesus, but don't miss what Luke records regarding...

A. The response of faith.

v.4

We might be tempted to skip over that verse in the emphasis upon the rejection of Jesus, but these words are profound and important. And so very encouraging. "Many of those who heard the word believed." Five thousand believed in Jesus the Messiah. And in that context of faith, Peter makes clear...

B. The source of spiritual power.

v.8 "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole."

By him, by his power. By the power of Jesus. By the power of the resurrected Jesus! That's what this miraculous healing demonstrates, and obviously, Peter identifies miracle that as "a good deed done to a helpless man."

So Peter and John would be threatened and forbidden to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. We will see that next time. But of course, they would not submit to that restraint, as we read in,

v.19 "But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Let me emphasize again, to summarize the objection to Jesus, then and now. Let me emphasize and summarize the stumbling block of the gospel, which is this—the reality of the presence of supernatural power. Sinful man, fallen man, wants to believe that his power is ultimate. That his authority is ultimate, that he is his own god, accountable to no one above or beyond himself. But God demands that we submit to him, to his power and authority. God demands that we confess not simply Jesus, but the Lord Jesus. The gospel demands that we acknowledge Jesus to be Lord, that we acknowledge God to the sovereign authority over the whole of our lives, that we become servants of that great God.

So let's go back, then, to the name of Jesus, to which Peter refers in,

v.10 "...let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole."

Specifically, let's make this full connection between Jesus and Psalm 118, which is central to Peter's sermon here in Acts 4. Thus the point is that,

III. JESUS IS THE FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY.

Old Testament prophecy! Beginning with,

v.11 "This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone."

It is the prophecy of,

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."

The emphasis of this prophecy is NOT upon the rejection of Jesus. Rather, the emphasis is upon his exaltation. He has become the chief cornerstone.

A. The stone rejected becomes the chief cornerstone.

And that has a repeated emphasis in the New Testament. It is, first of all, a warning to those who reject Jesus. So in explaining the parable of the wicked vinedressers, we read,

Mat. 21:40 "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" 41 They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their

seasons." 42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes'? 43 "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. 44 And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."

Yet Jesus becomes the chief cornerstone. In one of the richest expositions of the New Testament people of God as the fulfillment of everything the Old Testament says about the people of God, we read in,

1 Peter 1:4 "Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." 7 Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone," 8 and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. 9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."

Likewise, in the language of Paul speaking of the identity of the New Testament church, we read,

Eph. 2:19 "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the

household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

Jesus is the chief cornerstone! He is the stone upon which the whole church is established. And what that means for Peter, when he preaches on the day of Pentecost, and what that means for me as I preach today, is simply this.

B. Jesus is the only way of salvation.

Thus we read,

v.12 “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Even if you don’t memorize much Scripture, or if remembering what you have tried to memorize is difficult for you, this is a verse with which you need to be familiar. And if you can’t memorize it because your mind just won’t accomplish that, then now immediately where to find it in the Bible.

v.12 “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Jesus himself says,

John 14:6 “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

In Paul’s words,

1 Tim. 2:5 “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, 7 for which I was

appointed a preacher and an apostle—I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.”

That is exclusive. The gospel is exclusive. The Christian religion is exclusive. Jesus is exclusive. “There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

1 John 5:11 “And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”

“He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

John 3:36 “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

I emphasize all of this so that you might have no confusion whatsoever in your own heart. That is important as God would give you opportunities to bear witness to the gospel, for it is these verses I am reading that must be so central to that witness.

I also emphasize this for your own encouragement, that Satan not be able to succeed in calling into question your faith or raising any doubts in your own mind, especially related to your own exercise of obedience and law-keeping. There is not a standard you must achieve in order to earn your salvation. Rather, that salvation comes through faith in Jesus the Messiah, and though you might well believe that and have believed it for some time, Satan will still try to bring an accusation against you. He may well succeed in shaking your faith or even questioning your eternal destiny.

Here is the answer to all those questions, the answer the questions and objections that any unbeliever might possess. He is the confidence and encouragement that is yours as you worship God even this morning, and the foundation for the joy with which you should come before the Lord.

v.10 "...let it be known to you all..., that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, [who was] crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11 This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Thus we sing together in our worship,

Psalm 118:19 "Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, And I will praise the LORD. 20 This is the gate of the LORD, Through which the righteous shall enter. 21 I will praise You, For You have answered me, And have become my salvation. 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."