

Matthew 21:1-11 Save Us Now Palm Sunday/Confirmation April 14, 2019

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God's grace & peace have been won for us by the suffering & death of our King and Savior, Jesus Christ.
We read from Matthew 21:1-11

These are your Words, dear Father. Help us to see Jesus as our King who saves us! Your Word is truth.

Dear Cheering Crowd in Christ,

The name *Jesus* and the word *Hosanna* don't sound alike in our language, but they in Hebrew. The angel Gabriel told Mary to name her Son: "*Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.*" (*Matthew 1:21*). Jesus means "the Lord saves." Thirty three years later as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the cry: "Hosanna," or "*Hoshianna*" in Hebrew, filled the air. How fitting was the people's cry "Save us now!" as Jesus rode into Jerusalem. How fitting for us and our confirmands to say Hosanna:

"Save us now!"

1. We are speaking to our King. Jesus set out with His disciples from Bethany to travel about 2 miles east to Jerusalem. As Jesus came over the brow and descended the Mt. of Olives, the crowds heading to Jerusalem for the Passover caught sight of Him. They sang the words from Psalm 118:24-26. The section reads, "*This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. O Lord, save us; (that's hosanna) O Lord, grant us success. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord....*" They sang these words to God at every Passover while traveling to Jerusalem. Now they sang them while looking at Jesus as He approached Jerusalem to save His people.

But there was a sense of emptiness in the words. By the end of the week, the crowd's shouts had changed to call for Jesus' death and the disciples had abandoned Jesus to his enemies and to die alone. The reality is that most in the crowd probably cried "Hosanna" with their voices but not with true faith.

The crowd had "faith" in their idea of who Jesus should be. They heard that He had done great miracles of healing and had fed 1,000's. No wonder they wanted Him to serve as their king! But, He didn't enter Jerusalem with an army. He didn't exhibit super power like Samson. He rode a lowly donkey! Many people that day cried Hosanna for a king of their making, not for Jesus the true King.

Palm Sunday is an exciting day in our church. It is always our confirmation Sunday. It also begins Holy Week. The services this week remind us of Christ's real purpose in coming into this world. We see in our Good Friday service a king like no other. Jesus willingly gave all He had in life to save us. We stand at the foot of the cross in fearful awe mixed with wonder that God could be so angry at our sins, yet sent Jesus give up His precious life to pay for all sins. We come to Easter worship not just for flowers or to make a pilgrimage to church, but to celebrate in the resurrection the Jesus' victory over death.

By God's grace, the Holy Spirit has led you and me to put our faith in Christ as our saving King. We acknowledge our sins before Jesus who knows all things. We confess that we deserve death and eternal judgment. But then we cry "Hosanna" to our King. He is our only hope of salvation. Without Him we are eternally lost. We cry: "Hosanna" to our King! We abandon all hope of saving ourselves. In true faith we plead: "Save us! There is no other way to eternal life!"

By God's grace for Christ's sake, our cry of faith is heard. Psalm 3:4 says: "*I call out to the Lord, and he answers me from his holy mountain.*" In David's day the "holy mountain" was where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. But now figuratively God's holy mountain is Calvary. How loudly and clearly God answered our prayer when He abandoned His Son on the cross to pay for our spiritual debt. On the cross hangs the answer for our problem of sin: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. He was crowned with thorns then, but He is crowned with glory and honor now as our living Savior.

We cry to Jesus with our hurts and problems and our fears and our doubts about His care and love for us. He answers back: "I am your King. My death and rising from death are proof of my forgiveness and love." Jesus is the proof that the Lord will save us. He's the proof that God will comfort, encourage, and strengthen us to live as His people. David wrote, "*Praise be to the Lord, for he has heard my cry for mercy*" (Psalm 28:6).

2. Hosanna is a motto for God's Kingdom. Matthew wrote that the crowd sang, "*Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*" (v. 9). Groups choose mottoes to reflect what they stand for. The Milwaukee Bucks basketball team's motto is "Fear the Deer." America's motto is: *E Pluribus Unum*, "Out of many, one." Out of many types of people - one nation. "Hosanna! Save us now!" is a fitting motto for the Kingdom of Christ!"

First, you have the word "save." Christ's kingdom is about saving us from the power and consequence of sin and connecting us to eternal life in paradise. This is the goal of our faith in Christ: having a perfect life forever in heaven. It is the reason Christ has brought people into his kingdom from nations all over the world!

But who understood that truth on Palm Sunday or during the rest of Holy Week? The crowd didn't. They thought Jesus had come to save Jerusalem by making a "heaven on earth." They wanted Jesus to heal their diseases and to multiply loaves of bread daily. They wanted Him to bring world peace. Mark's gospel records that the crowd shouted, "*Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!*" (Mark 11:10). They wanted a physical kingdom just like King David's had been!

But Jesus would say later that week, "*My kingdom is not of this world*" and "*My kingdom is from another place*" (John 18:36). His kingdom is about eternal salvation not just peace on earth. His kingdom wasn't to make a one-world government, but to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and instructing people so that they are prepared to receive the Lord's Supper as a blessing. The Holy Spirit is working as He will lead 9 students to confess their faith and to call to God saying: Hosanna. Lord, save us now!

We who believe the truth will continue to speak of Christ and tell people "*the good news of the kingdom*" (Luke 16:16). Hosanna isn't just about individuals, but it's all God's people in Christ. We are all part of one body or all members of the holy Christian Church. We live for each other in Christ, not just to satisfy ourselves.

Like so many of the Jews at Jesus' time who wanted God's kingdom to be of this world, many people today are looking for a golden-age here on earth. But that is not the motto of "Hosanna" means to us. We will experience glory in heaven as it streams from Christ. John hears people in heaven say in Revelation 7:10: "*Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.*" That is where our heaven will be. But, that does not mean that we are without Christ here. Hosanna! Save us now! Christ is our strength and His love is our motivation to live as His people now. We have great things to look forward to with Him and so much to lose without Him.

So, "Hosanna! Save us now!" That's what Jesus rode into Jerusalem to accomplish. That's what the cross assures us He did. That's what the empty tomb guarantees He will save us and all who trust in Him. What a day to celebrate! It's Palm Sunday and a confirmation, which lead us into special services of Holy Week. We gladly say: Hosanna! Amen.