

Hosanna to the Son of David! (Matthew 21:1-11)

When someone important comes to town, what are some things that happen? This past Monday in Glendale we had the finals for the NCAA's March Madness where Tarheels of North Carolina defeated the Bulldogs of Gonzaga 71-65 to become this year's champions. Although most of us probably didn't go to the game since the Wildcats lost in the Sweet 16, what do you think some of the pomp and circumstance was in Glendale. The colors of the two teams would be seen everywhere. The police would be standing tall in full fashion with reinforcements a radio call away. And the players and coaching staff would look their part too. Or say that someone important came to Tucson like Brad Pitt or Jennifer Lawrence of *Hunger Games* fame for a big movie's premiere. If you or I were lucky enough to be at the premiere, what would we see? Probably the richest red carpet in all of Tucson going from the theater's entrance to the sidewalk. A long, sleek limousine would pull up to the red carpet and park so the movie stars could get out. And as the stars walked down the red carpet dressed in their finest, the air would be full of camera flashes and questions and compliments.

How strangely different Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem was on Palm Sunday. Some things were the same – you had the crowds flocking around Jesus and making a big commotion shouting words they may have used in worship – **“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”** If Jerusalem didn't know about Jesus beforehand, they would now. But then there were some things that were different. You have Jesus clearly visible above the crowds, but he's riding on a colt – the foal of a donkey. Donkeys aren't what you expect an important person to ride on. They're for hard work in the field, what the common person rode. It'd be like if the Tarheels and Bulldogs came to Glendale on the Greyhound and public buses. Or if Brad Pitt and Jennifer Lawrence pulled up to the red carpet in a 4-door sedan with sun damage on the hoods as I see all over the place. It isn't what you expect them to do. And yet when Jesus came into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, it was on purpose.

It all goes back to an Old Testament prophet named Zechariah who wrote in chapter 9 of his book **“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.’ ”** We read these words earlier and when you get home, I invite you to read the rest of Zechariah chapter 9 so you can get the full picture. We're told in these verses how

the daughter of Zion, that is, the people of Jerusalem, would recognize God's promised king. He would come riding on a donkey – the lowly common animal for those who work in peace. Now normally you would expect a king to ride a magnificent stallion like you would ride in war. But Jesus doesn't come as the king that we would expect. He comes as the king we need. He doesn't come as the king of war. He comes as the king of peace.

I wonder how many of the people who shouted "*Hosanna!*" knew what it meant that Jesus is the promised Messiah. The connection to Zechariah was probably lost on them since not even the disciples drew the connection as St. John tells us in his account of Palm Sunday. No the crowds were shouting "*Hosanna!*" because they were expecting Jesus to be a king of war. To come into Jerusalem, start a revolution, and take back Jerusalem from the Romans. Then once they had Jerusalem, Jesus, the Son of David, would lead the Jews, the people of David, in war to rebuild Israel to be like how it was in the glory days of King David. While it may have seemed strange to them to see Jesus riding on a lowly donkey, that didn't matter. Because they were convinced that their dream had been answered. The Son of David was coming to bring back the kingdom of David. So they happily shouted "*Hosanna!*" and gave Jesus a king's welcome. But as Jesus would show in just a few days, he didn't come to Jerusalem be the king of war. He came to be the king of peace. And the peace he would bring wouldn't be the peace they expected, but the peace they needed.

Do you identify with the crowds who, by and large, shouted "*Hosanna!*" for the wrong reasons? When Jesus doesn't give you the peace you expect him to? If you were to ask the average Joe to describe what peace in his life looked like, how do you think he would answer? Probably something like this. "*A peaceful life is one where things are generally good. You know, the family gets along with each other, the bills are paid on time, things look good for the future, and stress doesn't really come up at all.*" So then when you read about Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to bring everlasting peace, does there seem to be a disconnect?

If we say that peace happens when family members generally get along, then where's God's peace in your family? Even when divorces are permitted for biblical reasons, they still bring untold hurt and stress into a family for decades afterwards. They say that if someone is going to attend church, it's either going to be Christmas, Easter, or Mother's Day. Easter is only 1 week away. But as you think

about your loved ones who won't even consider coming to church, you remember again how peace is so lacking in your family. If we say that peace happens when the bills get paid and the future looks promising, then where's God's peace in your finances? No matter how many times you duck the phone calls and avoid your mailbox, the bills will come. And that number in your bank account won't be enough to pay them all in time. Or maybe it's not today you're worried about but tomorrow. With inflation on the rise and your fixed income, the question is not if. It's when. When will you will have to change your lifestyle in ways you do not want to? While the crowds gladly shouted "*Hosanna!*" you and I, when we see how Jesus hasn't brought us the peace we expect, we say "*Hosanna? Really?*"

But if you remember back to Zechariah's prophecy, Jesus doesn't promise us the peace that we expect. Instead he brings the peace we need. God's everlasting peace which is primarily concerned about our relationship with God where he calls us his dear children, holy in sight, because we have been forgiven our sins by the blood of Jesus. And how desperately we need God's peace. We have sinned against him in countless ways. By breaking his law. By holding God up to our sinful standards of what peace should be when he doesn't promise those things. The Christian life on earth will not be all roses and sunshine. No as St. Paul tells us "**We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God**" (Acts 14:22). Sometimes those hardships will be within the family because of different beliefs. Sometimes it'll be because of money due to sinful situations or bad choices and habits we have. But when we blame God for failing to deliver on what we want? That's falsely accusing God. Yet although we can be as mistaken as the crowds who shouted "*Hosanna!*" Jesus still comes to bring the peace we need.

And he would do it in just a few days after his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Because it's in Jerusalem that Jesus would die on the cross for your and my sins. Who would have thought that the death of one person could do so much? It's because Jesus is more than a man. He's also true God. So that when he died on the cross, it would count for the entire world as he endured all of God's wrath and punishment for everyone's sins as he breathed his last on Good Friday. And then on Easter Sunday, in the countryside of Jerusalem, Jesus would rise from the dead and leave behind an empty tomb as he promised to his disciples. These are the joyous truths of peace we get to celebrate and review in just a few days in our special Holy Week services here at Grace Lutheran. And this peace is yours already for Christ has forgiven your sins. He has declared you right with God above because our Savior has already suffered the punishment for our sins. And no

matter how difficult life may be here, God's peace will always be with you because it has been completed on the cross.

The peace that Jesus came to bring on Palm Sunday is the peace we badly need. While the crowds may have shouted "*Hosanna!*" for the wrong reasons, they were right to give praise to God by shouting "*Hosanna!*" as we might say "*Alleluia!*" today. So to help us get into the Palm Sunday mood, if you're not already, I'm going to have us say the first Hosanna sentence the crowd joyfully shouted a few times this morning. The words are **"Hosanna to the Son of David!"** If you want to open your worship folder so you can see the words, you're welcome. Let's say those words together now. **"Hosanna to the Son of David!"** Good. So that you know when to say it, I'll say these words as an introduction – because Jesus has brought us the peace we need, we say with gladsome voices – (and you say) **"Hosanna to the Son of David!"** Let's practice that one time. And so because Jesus has brought us the peace we need, we say with gladsome voices – **"Hosanna to the Son of David!"** Awesome. Keep your ears out for those words as we continue with our sermon.

The Palm Sunday crowds praised God by shouting **"Hosanna in the highest!"** which we get to do in word and song each worship service. But don't limit yourself to Sunday morning. God's peace is yours already. Your sins have been forgiven and you live in righteousness every moment you breathe God's grace. Feel free to give praise to God the other days of the week however you feel comfortable. And so, because Jesus has brought us the peace we need, we say with gladsome voices – **"Hosanna to the Son of David!"**

Hosanna indeed. As Jesus made his way into Jerusalem, the crowds went before and after him stirring up all of Jerusalem. To anyone who asked **"Who is this?"** the crowds gladly answered **"This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."** But we know he's more than simply a prophet. He is the king of peace. So when your neighbors and coworkers see you making time in your busy schedule for our special services for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday, don't be afraid to tell them who it is you're going to hear about. It's the Son of David who is far greater than King David ever was. It's Jesus, the king of everlasting peace, your Savior. And so, because Jesus has brought us the peace we need, we say with gladsome voices – **"Hosanna to the Son of David!"**

Hosanna indeed. But the Palm Sunday crowds didn't only welcome Jesus with shouts of "*Hosanna!*" They showed their joy with their actions. The disciples

put their coats on the donkey to be a makeshift saddle. The crowds put out the welcome mat to Jerusalem with their own coats. If they didn't have a coat, they cut down the nearby palm branches and laid them on the ground. So you and I, we can show our hosannas with our actions as well. Take a look at your finances and see if your offerings of thanks reflect the joy in your heart. Offer your time and volunteer for something at church. Reach out to your loved ones and invite to come with you to Easter even if you're already sure they'll say no. The joy of Jesus and the peace he brings isn't just for those of us here. It's for the entire world. And so, because Jesus has brought us the peace we need, we say with gladsome voices – **“Hosanna to the Son of David!”**

Hosanna. Yes, hosanna. Jesus has brought the peace we need with his death on the cross and resurrection from the grave. It's not reserved for a select few. It's for you and me and every other sinner. And it's ours now through faith in him as our only Savior. What a joy it is to live in God's peace because it means we are right with him now and in the life to come. So for one last time. Because Jesus has brought us the peace we need, we say with gladsome voices – **“Hosanna to the Son of David!”** Amen.