

# WHAT'S ALL THE SHOUTING ABOUT?

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ March 20, 2016

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>3</sup> If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’” <sup>4</sup> They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, <sup>5</sup> some people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” <sup>6</sup> They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. <sup>7</sup> When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. <sup>8</sup> Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. <sup>9</sup> Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” <sup>10</sup> “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!” (Mark 11:1-10)

Behold the Lamb of God for sinners slain,

I can only imagine what was going on in the mind of the prophet Zechariah. He was one of the men who had returned to Jerusalem after the Persian Empire allowed the Jews to return to their homeland. The date was around 520BC. He had received prophecies or messages from God concerning the future of God’s people and the future of the enemies of God’s people. One of the messages he received had to do with the long promised Savior of the Jews, the Messiah. He spoke of an astounding peace, a peace that would overcome war, a peace that would be proclaimed to all people. And God’s people would rejoice at the bringer of this peace, because he would be the king, he would be the Messiah. In words we just heard Zechariah foretold: **“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”**

When the pilgrims and residents gathered in Jerusalem put two and two together with this prophecy and Jesus entering the city, you can see the reason for their shouts of joy. But it is not just the people of Jerusalem in 30AD who can rejoice, but us as well. Because the same Messiah that God promised for the Jews, came for all people. Came to fill a need that we all have. He is the answer to the question of WHAT’S ALL THE SHOUTING ABOUT?

1. Hosanna to the Lord who needs nothing
2. Blessing to the people who need everything

(1)

Chances are, if you’re like many Christians, your mind may be already drifting to Easter coming up next week. And while we realize that Palm Sunday is important, it’s easy to set it aside and focus on the real celebration. While a Christian certainly does not want to minimize the importance of Easter, we shouldn’t be so quick to dismiss Palm Sunday either. When you put yourself in the shoes of the Jews, the first Palm Sunday was a pretty significant event. To many Jews it was a sign that the Messiah was near and that something special was

about to happen. This is why they were excited and shouting. But it would only be afterwards that they realized the full significance of the words they were shouting. But that's getting ahead of ourselves.

Our Palm Sunday story begins with Jesus as he is approaching Jerusalem for the Passover feast. If you've been with us the past several weeks, you have heard a number of times about the importance of the Passover to the Jews. This would be the third and final time Jesus would venture to Jerusalem for the Passover. It was a journey that many of his disciples didn't think that he would make. This was because the Jewish leaders had already put a price on his head. He could have been arrested on the spot. But Jesus' inner circle of 12 disciples had heard many times already that Jesus was going to Jerusalem this final time to die. They may not have fully grasped the idea, but they saw Jesus' resoluteness to go to Jerusalem.

Before a pilgrim reached Jerusalem from the East, they would have already wound their way up some 3,000 feet of elevation. The crest of the journey was at the Mount of Olives, where two villages, Bethany and Bethphage resided. Just around the other side of the Mount, Jerusalem would be visible. But Jesus chose to stop here for an unusual errand. He sent two of his disciples into one of the villages in search for a donkey. When they found it, they were to untie it, and bring it to Jesus. If anyone asked what they were doing, they were to respond, **"The Lord needs it."**

This is a unique instance that Jesus refers to himself by that name. But it's true isn't it? Jesus was more than just the leader of this band of disciples, but he was also the Lord of creation. And as such, he would have no problem knowing where a donkey would be tied up and what question would be asked his disciples. That was the very point that the apostle Paul, the writer of Philippians brought out in our second lesson for this morning. **"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing."** Jesus showed a glimpse of his omniscience by selecting a donkey for the remaining journey to Jerusalem. But he also showed his omniscience and resolve towards the mission of God.

Once the requisite animal was brought, the disciples laid their cloaks on its back and placed Jesus upon it. From there they continued on the path that led around the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem. The image of the city came into view, portrayed by an artist in this picture. And as he drew closer, the crowds grew thicker. People knew there was something special going on. Nobody needed to guess WHAT ALL THE SHOUTING WAS ABOUT, they knew. And they shouted **"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"**

The term "Hosanna" has the original meaning of "save us," much like survivors from a sunken ship would cry out to a rescue boat. But in recent times it became simply a declaration of praise. Their other cry, **"Hosanna in the highest,"** was an indication that heaven too was declaring praises to Jesus riding into Jerusalem on this day. WHAT WAS ALL THE SHOUTING ABOUT? It was hosanna to the Lord who needs nothing.

If you or I would have been witnesses to that first Palm Sunday celebration, I think we would find it pretty special. It would have been the atmosphere of a victory parade. But when you think about it for Jesus, it must have looked pretty ordinary, especially when we consider where he came from. When I was in Africa, one of the sights I can remember is visiting congregations in rural villages. And as you drove up in your vehicle, the bare-footed, dusty children with tattered clothes would excitedly run alongside the car as it pulled up, and even as you stepped out of the car, they were excited to see the "azungu" or white people. If that was your first experience from Africa, you might be excited by the attention, but you also would be anxious to get away from the relative

dirtiness of the African bush. The difference between what we are used to here, and what Africans in rural villages deal with all the time is stark. Yet, that difference is nothing compared to what Jesus went through.

We had a reference to that in our second lesson from Philippians. Where was Jesus before he was born as a baby into this world? He was up in heaven, enjoying all the joy and bliss of heaven. Anything that this world could offer would pale in comparison to that, no matter how special it might seem to us. All these hosannas were to a Lord who needed nothing. Despite not needing anything, Jesus was not anxious to get out of this world, but he was resolute in his mission. The poverty of our condition was a constant reminder of why he was here. He was riding a donkey, an animal of peace, entering the city of Jerusalem, whose name means “peace.”

## (2)

Yet this city was anything but peace. Jerusalem was representative of everything that mankind stands for. For the Jews, Jerusalem was the place of the temple, the dwelling place of God with men. It was an exciting journey to be able to go to Jerusalem. But, like anything touched by human hands, Jerusalem was not the city God wanted it to be. A few weeks ago we heard a prime example of that when Jesus threw out money changers and animal sellers from the temple. Underneath the outward show of piety was a festering problem beneath. On the surface, the crowds shouting hosanna and blessing may have appeared just fine, but underneath they were anything but.

The crowds were shouting “**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,**” when in reality, it was them who were being blessed, but not in the way many expected. For many of the Jews, they pictured the Messiah’s entrance into Jerusalem as the start of what they considered the triumphant return of the nation of Israel. This was what they considered their biggest problem. Which isn’t unlike how we think much of the time either.

How often have we thought or wished for Jesus to just fix some of the problems in our lives. If I could just get \$500 for a car repair. If he could just help me in my relationship with my spouse. If he could just fix all the political squabbling that’s happening in our country. If he could just give us enough money to buy land and put up a building at Grace-Vail so we don’t have to set up every Sunday or bring us more members at Grace-Benson. When you think about it, Jesus does have the power to do that.

Jesus has the power to show up in glory and fix all the problems in our lives and the lives of others. He could have wiped out all diseases and made a kingdom where bread was free. He had that power. But man’s real problem would have remained. The spiritual battle would have been conceded to Satan. People would still be dying in their sin. People would still be condemned to spend the length of eternity away from God and his joy.

When we look at our lives, we might be able to see a lot of “needs,” and we might complain that Jesus isn’t helping us through them. But that isn’t why Jesus came. Jesus did not come to create a heaven on earth, he came to give us the way to heaven. He was a blessing to the people who needed everything. This is why Jesus came to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. It wasn’t to be praised by adoring crowds, it was to save those adoring crowds and us.

Palm Sunday was the start of something special. It was the culmination of the promise God made thousands of years before to Adam and Eve. It was the culmination of Jesus taking our place under the hammer

of God's judgment. He was the king that not many people wanted because he didn't satisfy their immediate need, but he was the king everyone needed because he paid for the sin that separated us from God.

This week is certainly a big week, perhaps the most exciting week for a Christian. Most of the excitement is in anticipation for Easter. I think you realize how important it is that Jesus came to take away sin. I hope you show that excitement in your life by inviting people to our Easter service, show them that you genuinely love and care for them. Because while the shouts of praise on Palm Sunday were well-deserved, the declaration of victory at Jesus returning to life next Sunday, is beyond compare. This week, let's warm up our voices! Amen.