

Theme: Powerful Words – Powerful Passion – “Hosanna to the Son of David!”

Text: Matthew 21:6-11

⁶ So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. 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!" 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."

“Hosanna!” It’s a word that we usually associate with Palm Sunday. We will sing this word, **“Hosanna,”** a number of times in our hymns today. We also sing **“Hosanna”** as a part of some of the liturgies we use in our church services on a regular basis. In fact, on some Sundays we sing the very words of v. 9 of our text, **'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! Hosanna in the highest!'** (v. 9).

But does anyone here know what this word **“Hosanna”** means? How do we know that these words from the multitudes, **“Hosanna to the Son of David!”** (v. 9), are in fact **Powerful Words** from Jesus’ **Powerful Passion** if we don’t even know what the word **“Hosanna”** means?

If you are confused as to what this word means, then it’s probably not the only thing that is confusing about this Palm Sunday scene. After all, we have a huge crowd lined up laying down palm branches and clothes on the road before Jesus, and they are praising Him and hailing Him as a king (**John 12:13**). But this Jesus is riding on a young donkey, a colt, probably much too small for a grown man. And instead of being escorted in by troops and a royal procession, He is followed by a small group of ordinary men made up mostly of some fisherman from Galilee.

As joyful, and triumphant as Palm Sunday was, and still is for us, it can also be very confusing. Yet it was a day and a scene that was full of meaning, as were these **powerful words** of praise from the crowd, **“Hosanna to the Son of David!”** (v. 9). As we discover the meaning of these words and the meaning of this Palm Sunday scene, we pray that the Holy Spirit would remove the confusion from our minds and hearts, and replace it with *exaltation* to our Savior and King, Jesus.

From the context of our text we can probably guess that this word **“Hosanna”** is a word of praise, and that’s what it is. However, its original, literal meaning it was a cry for help from God meaning, *“save”* or *“help, I pray.”* In modern English we would probably say, “Help me, please” or “save me, please.” Eventually, however, this word came to be used exclusively as an expression of praise, just like we use it still today. We could translate the phrase from our text, **“Praise to the Son of David!”**

Why is this phrase so powerful? Because by these words, **“Hosanna to the Son of David,”** the people were proclaiming Jesus to be the long-awaited Messiah. You see, the Messiah that was prophesied in the Old Testament would be a descendent of the great king of Israel, King David. Now, did all the people in those multitudes believe this about Jesus? Probably not. It appears as if some of the people who were there were just “caught up in the moment,” since many of the people of Jerusalem had to ask, **“Who is this?”** (v. 10). Can we blame them?

Let’s put it in perspective: What if you were watching an old Western movie and John Wayne, the hero of the story, rode into town to save the day on a little donkey? You’d probably wonder what was going on. Or can you imagine a conquering king from any time or era in history entering into his

capital city riding on a little donkey? Can you imagine the citizens of that king beaming with pride if someone asked them, **“Who is this?”** “That man riding the baby donkey is my king!” Probably not! You have to admit, this scene is a bit confusing, isn’t it? This was not exactly the type of powerful descendent of King David that many of the people had been expecting. *“This guy is the Messiah, the Savior that had been promised to the Jews for thousands of years? His name is Jesus, a prophet from Nazareth in Galilee? (see v. 11) Where is Nazareth? And why is He riding a donkey?”*

It’s entirely possible that their disappointment in Jesus as the Messiah was what caused many of the people of Jerusalem to get “caught up in the moment” of a very different mob on Good Friday and shout **“Crucify Him!” (Luke 23:21)** instead of **“Hosanna!”**

Our Old Testament reading from Zechariah—a prophecy which Matthew tells us was fulfilled by Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem on that donkey’s colt (**Matthew 21:5**)—helps clear up the confusion of Palm Sunday for us: **“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” (Zech. 9:9).**

Jesus did not come into Jerusalem as an earthly Messiah to conquer lands and nations and establish an earthly kingdom greater than that of His ancestor, King David. He came for a much greater purpose than that. He came to die! He came to bring salvation to all people, for all time through His death. Now, He did come to conquer and establish His kingdom: He came to conquer sin by His death and to conquer death by His resurrection. His work of salvation established a greater kingdom than King David’s: His eternal spiritual kingdom in the hearts of His believers. A kingdom of eternal peace with God through the forgiveness of sins, which His death won for us. Jesus is more than a king. He is our Savior!

We too can sing and shout our **“Hosanna(s) to the Son of David!” (v. 9)** on this Palm Sunday, and every day. We can cry out to our Savior with a plea for His divine mercy, **“Hosanna! Save us LORD, we pray!”** We have “laid down palm branches” in our church to the honor of our glorious Savior King. But more importantly, we honor Jesus, our triumphant King, with our hearts and lives. We prepare the way for Jesus’ entry into our hearts with Spirit-worked repentance and faith. We “lay down our garments” of selfishness, and pride, and offer up for Jesus’ use “the garments” of our offerings, our time, our energies and talents, yes, even our very lives.

As we look ahead to the events of Holy Week and all that Jesus went through to earn our salvation—the desertion of His own disciples, the insults, the pain of the torture that the Roman soldiers inflicted on Him, and of course death itself and the God-forsakenness of hell on that cursed cross—when we consider all this and hear once again those glorious words of triumph on Easter Sunday, **“He is Risen!” (Mark 16:6)**, the words which secured our salvation and guaranteed our own resurrection we too will shout and sing our words of praise, **“Hosanna! Praise to the Son of David!”**

Yes, this triumphant day of Palm Sunday can be a bit confusing—in fact the whole week of Holy Week is filled with events that can confuse our human logic:

- † A king on a donkey?
- † A conqueror on a cross?
- † A man rising from death to life?

Confusing, maybe. But when we understand and realize by faith what our minds cannot always fully grasp we will see the majesty in Jesus’ lowliness, the power in His willing service and self-sacrifice, and the victory in His empty grave. We will then always sing His **“Hosannas!”** and to anyone who asks us, **“Who is this?”** we will answer proudly like the multitudes in our text, **“This is Jesus”** our King; our Savior! Amen.