

Hosanna, Priest and King!

- ✠ Glorify your grace. (vv.15-18)
- ✠ Preserve us in prayer. (vv.19-22)
- ✠ Steady our faithfulness. (vv.23-25)

In the name of Jesus, our soul saving Priest and King, dear rejoicing children of God:

When Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on a donkey's colt which no one had ever ridden, He was performing a miracle. But even before that, He showed Himself to be true God by knowing exactly what His disciples would find in Jerusalem and just what to tell the owners of the mother donkey and her colt when they asked, "Why are you untying it?" "The Lord needs it" (Luke 19:31) was all they needed to hear. But Jesus had to do so much more because an unbroken horse or donkey will not let anyone climb up on them. And for a full grown man to sit on a little colt would require more strength for a small animal. Jesus our **Priest and King** showed His power and authority as the Creator. But it is His reason for coming to Jerusalem that makes us join the crowds singing: **Hosanna, Priest and King!** From the Holy Spirit's letter to the Hebrew Christians we add the first of three petitions. *Save us, Priest and King!*

✠ Glorify your grace. (vv.15-18)

My Grandfather's horses were nothing like the cowboys rode in South Dakota. At one branding they gave this teenager an old horse too slow for a real cowboy, but less likely to kill me. Everything went fine rounding up range bulls for three days, then cows with their calves one sunny spring morning. I thought for sure that horse was getting to know me. But one of the cowboys warned, "When horses are tied up like this don't even raise your hand to scratch your head. They spook real easy." You know what happens when someone tells you that? Your head starts to itch unbearably. So I very slowly raised my hand, but sure enough, the horse reared up and pulled away from his reigns. How embarrassing!

And what a clear illustration of our Savior's glorious **grace** to ride an unbroken colt! The kindhearted love of God that made the colt so peaceful and strong, is what our Lord Jesus gives us as our great High Priest. He was not like the cowboys who got so angry at me for being an inexperienced "greenhorn." Jesus was not even like Eli the high priest who falsely accused Hannah of being drunk because she prayed so hard to have a son. Remember Samuel? (1 Samuel 1:12ff) As our holy **Priest and King**, Jesus could rightly accuse us of all sorts of sins because some of us have been drunk or at least impatient and unkind. Sometimes we don't even need alcohol to make us mean and surly. We're just tired and depressed, so we take it out on those around us, especially our families.

Like the humble colt He rode, Jesus humbly took all our burdens of grief and sin on His tired back. That's why He rode into Jerusalem amid shouts of "**Hosanna!**" that first Palm Sunday. And this is a greater miracle than riding an unbroken colt or knowing all things. Coming to save us from our sins is the miracle of God's **grace** about which the *Holy Spirit...testifies to us*. He said 600 years before Christ through Jeremiah the prophet: "*This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.*" Then he adds: "*Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.*" Our hearts tell us it's wrong to murder, but God clarifies that it's also murder to hate someone in your heart. Men and women sleeping together unmarried is fornication, but so is lusting in your heart. Stealing is sin, but so is coveting something or someone we're not supposed to have. God sees more sins in us than we'll ever know. It hurts when He shines His bright light in our hearts. We want to rear up like a spooked horse and pull away. But He calms us down with this glorious **grace**: "*Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.*" How can He say that?

✠ **Preserve us in prayer. (vv.19-22)**

Every time we come to church we're looking at the answer. Do you see the altar in front of you? This was not possible for ancient Jewish believers because the Most Holy Place was behind a heavy curtain. Only the High Priest could go in there once a year on the Day of Atonement. But he dared not go empty handed or he would die. He had to carry a bowl of blood from the sacrifice to sprinkle on the cover of the ark (box) called the "KAPPORETH," or "mercy seat." Two angels were above that cover touching their wings. Inside the box, the ark of the covenant, were the two tablets of stone engraved with the Ten Commandments. This would make God angry because the people kept breaking God's Law by sinning all the time. So do we. But God promised to dwell above the Mercy Seat. He would see the blood to remind Him of the perfect Sacrifice to come. We receive this Sacrifice each time we partake of Christ's body and blood in Lord's Supper. As the blood came between God above and His broken Law below, so Christ's blood comes between us sinners. Now when our holy God looks at us, He sees us through the blood of Christ by which we are forgiven. When Jesus died on the cross, the veil of the temple tore in two from top to bottom opening this way to God through Christ's body.

"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water." Jesus rode into Jerusalem as our **Priest-King** to offer Himself as the ultimate Sacrifice.

God wants us to understand this as we ask Him to **Preserve us in prayer**. So think about BBQ or grilling out, a favorite summertime activity. Jesus, our Sacrifice, is literally called a "freshly killed and living way for us through the curtain...his body...." You don't want "road kill" scraped off the highway to cook on the grill for your friends. You want fresh chicken or steak from the butcher or grocery store. Doesn't it make you hungry just thinking about it? Can't you almost taste the aroma? God says that because of Jesus our prayers are as pleasing to Him as fire roasted fellowship offerings. He commanded His people to eat joyfully with their families in His presence. Pray confidently! We are *washed with [the] pure water* of Baptism and cleansed heart and soul with the blood of Christ. **Hosanna, Priest and King!**

✠ **Steady our faithfulness. (vv.23-25)**

A college student told her pastor, "I only go to church when I'm home because my mother makes me." A new convert said, "Not going to church is so much easier. It's like a snowball that keeps getting bigger. The longer you stay away, the harder it is to get rolling again." Another new member said, "It's hard to break the old family habits." They all failed to heed this warning: *Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.* The fires of Judgment Day are coming. This is no time to get comfortable and lazy.

A horse does not like the cowboy jamming his sharp spurs into its flanks. That's why the horse runs. We don't appreciate if a fellow Christian asks, "Why are you doing that?" or admonishes us for sinning. And it is a sin to purposely keep staying away from hearing God's Word and worshiping Him with our fellow Christians. God wants us to get into the habit of going to church and *"not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing."* But don't think it's easy to tell someone this.

Pastor Loren Steel was a good artist. During a meeting with Pastor Liang and me, he drew a picture of three horses' backsides. He put his name on one, Pastor Liang's on another, and mine on the third. Then he said, "Our fellow pastors do not like what we are telling them from God's Word. This is how they see us, like horses' rear ends. Get over it!" Wish I had the picture. God hears our Palm Sunday prayer, **Hosanna, Priest and King! Steady our faithfulness.** Keep hearing God's Word. Then God will **glorify His grace** and make our prayers stronger like the little colt that carried Jesus. Amen.