

Matthew 21:1-11
April 14, 2019 – PALM SUNDAY

Three Words of Truth: *Save Us Now!*¹

Without knowing it “the Palm Sunday crowds were singing their ‘hosanna’ to the Perfect Passover Lamb provided by God. On the 10th day of Nisan, each Jewish family selected an unblemished lamb and set it apart for the Lord’s sacred purposes. Palm Sunday...10th day of Nisan. As Jesus made his humble entry into Jerusalem, God was declaring that his own spotless Lamb was being set aside for death before the week was out...every reason to shout, ‘Blessed is the Lamb who comes in the name of the Lord!’”²

“Hosanna!” Who knew? *Hoshianna* is Hebrew for **Save Us Now!** They were shouting and singing to *Yeshua*, Jesus, “Savior.” Who knew? Just one, only the Just One. Contrast five groups with Jesus that day: **Disciples**, **Children**, **Jewish leaders**, **Roman soldiers**, **Pilgrims in Jerusalem**.

Disciples – did not want to go up to Jerusalem with Jesus. They objected, “*They want to kill you there!*” Only Jesus is determined to go, promising His suffering and death, resurrection and exaltation six times in Matthew since the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1 – 20:28) *Yeshua* would come humbly as promised long ago through Zechariah, “*gentle, riding on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.*” (NETNT) Think of the horrendous burden of our sins that the Christ was about to bear on the cursed tree when the LORD “*laid on him the iniquity of us all.*” (Isaiah 53:6) God’s Lamb: **Save Us Now!**

Children – Jerusalem means “house of peace.” The only ones really feeling it on Palm Sunday were the children, all excited to sing, but not knowing why. Yet they would go home from prayers and praises like our children to break the 4th Commandment by disobeying their parents, arguing with their siblings. *Hoshianna!* – **Save Us Now!** Who gets it? Only *Yeshua*, the Christ who even as a pre-teen went home to submit to Mary and Joseph. He is “*the LORD our Righteousness*” from God.

Apparently, the children kept it up with their loud, “Hosannas!” Matthew records that after Jesus drove all the merchants from the temple area, *when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they were indignant. “Do you hear what these children are saying?” they asked him. “Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read, “ ‘From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise?’”* (Matthew 21:15f NIV84) God always wants His children praising Him and adults more like children.

Jewish leaders – Ah, but that was not the Pharisees. They hated to hear “Hosanna!” Tried to stop it. Like modern Christians wanting to build churches in quiet, secluded places? Uninviting, even ugly structures? Jesus says, “*The stones will cry out!*” (Luke 19:40) **Save Us Now!** Break our stony hearts!

Are we too much like modern Christians whose love has grown cold? “Fake Christianity offers the Christian an imitation of Christ’s glory in heaven, not of his humiliation on earth. The phony and the artificial church turns worship into a spiritual happy hour devoid of repentance, with cheap absolution, with no thought of taking God seriously in either the law or the gospel. And people love it. They still get to be their own god, their own bible, their own source of ultimate truth and salvation.”³

Matthew 21, connect us to the divinity of Christ – not flashy enough to catch the attention of the crowd or a disciple shooting videos with his phone. Hiding His divine glory in His State of Humiliation, Jesus simply and precisely tells the two disciples what they will find and what they need to say to the owners. As true God, the Man Jesus is omniscient. *Yeshua* knows all things. (John 16:30; 21:17)

¹ Adapted from the 2019 Lenten series by Keith Wessel for Northwestern Publishing House. Order: 800-662-6022.

² Rev. Wayne Schulz, WELS Mission Counselor, email letter to “Dear friend interested in missions,” dated March 24, 1999.

³ Deutschlander, Daniel M. *THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS – Reflections on His Cross and Ours.* (2008) NPH 800-662-6022.

Yeshua's divine glory is still hidden in His Palm Sunday. Some scholars twist themselves into knots trying to determine what Jesus rode. There is no doubt according to Zechariah's prophecy. It was not a mule or a horse for war, but a donkey to show a heart of peace and humility. Yet all miss the point which Mark 11:2 intimates so simply: "...*which no one has ever ridden.*" (NIV) Anyone who has tried to ride an unbroken colt of any kind could explain the miracle of this unnaturally docile animal. It accepts garments without a sound. Calmly and without bucking this young male lets a full grown man sit on it. Nearby its mother likewise makes no noise. Her silence adds to the quiet majesty of this hidden miracle. The Creator has come to His creation; His creatures gladly serve. Christ in His humility proves again His divine power over nature as the ultimate Man. (Psalm 8; Hebrews 2:6-9)

Roman soldiers – All they could see was a riot coming. Pilate's problems were far more than keeping peace as a Roman governor. He viewed the Palm Sunday with suspicion. Jesus would soon be in his courtroom. He would be acting like governments today. Jesus commanded His disciples to lead the donkey and her colt to Him, He also had warned His disciples, "***You will be led***" before government authorities to testify to God's truth. There is always a price to pay with Jesus as we pick up our cross and follow Him. We do not bring this on ourselves by seeking martyrdom nor by committing crimes. Surely, "***We must obey God rather than men***" (Acts 5:29) if commanded to be silent instead of witnessing for Christ. But when we live according to God's commands, civil authorities make up crimes to throw Daniel into the lions' den. Powerful worldly forces always think they are in charge, but the Almighty God uses their conceit to bring His Word into their courtroom. They hear God's truth through His witnesses, like Pilate hearing God's own Son. Either they will repent while in this time of grace or they will suffer the consequences in God's courtroom when the Son of Man returns as Judge in glory with His holy angels.

Pilgrims in Jerusalem – curious onlookers asking, "What's all this?" How far has your curiosity has come? Know friends and relatives watching from outside? Millions have no way to pray these three powerful words in one: *Hoshianna!* **Save Us Now!** Our Palm Sunday King comes without an invitation, unexpectedly with greatest message ever told. Christ came to be crucified for you. His Easter victory over death is proclaimed for all people, including you! His gift of eternal life yours by faith in Him. This is not "soft science" or mere religious myth and legend. This is solid truth to give you "a sure ground for faith, a firm support for hope, and the assurance of sins forgiven"⁴ forever and for always.

God wants, God deserves our prayers,
our praises, and
the offerings that prove them.

Hosanna is prayer and praise in one. But how quickly those throngs of Palm Sunday worshipers went can back to enjoying God's gifts while forgetting the Giver. Our sins keep crying out, "Crucify," making our words cheap, even blasphemous. God wants us to prove our repentance by deeds of love for neighbors starting with family at home. *Yeshua!* There too, *Hoshianna!* **Save Us Now!**

Lead us to follow you humbly, patiently, fearlessly through the trauma of the Triduum to its glory:

- † Hosanna's glory in the Holy Supper on Maundy Thursday,
- † Hosanna's glory in the gory grace that erased the record and guilt of our sin on Good Friday,
- † Hosanna's glory in the empty tomb, blazing our Easter victory over sin, death and hell.

You paid the price. You won the war. Work your victory in our hearts and lives today! *Yeshua, Hoshianna!* John sees in Revelation: "***There before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."***" (Revelation 7:9f NIV84) Amen.

⁴ Unattested quotes are from the Palm Sunday worship folder at New Life Evangelical Lutheran, Shoreview, MN, 4/14/2019. For *The Preacher's Apprentice (TPA)* sermon study or copies: m.cordes@comast.net . New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church You can also call: 651-484-1169. Hear the sermon at www.wels.us/newlife . 180 County Rd F - Shoreview, MN 55126