

Palm Sunday - Sermon
April 25, 2018

Grace, Mercy and Peace be unto you from God, our Father and from our LORD and Savior, Jesus Christ. Pray with me: Father, may the word of my mouth and the meditation of our heart be acceptable in Your sight, through Christ our LORD. In the Name of Jesus, Amen.

Today, we re-enacted what those, who went before and those who followed Jesus to Jerusalem, did and said at the time of the New Testament. We have sung hymns from the first millennium. We have spoken God-given parts of the Church's liturgy that even predate the Savior Jesus and were already being used by God's people centuries earlier. In short, today we were part of a Palm Sunday Procession with parts of the liturgy that originated in the Old Testament, and has extended through two millennia of Christian history, but centers on the New Testament event that lead to our salvation.

That New Testament event that lead to our salvation was the focus of today's Passion from the Gospel of St. Mark. Jesus's entry to Jerusalem that Palm Sunday is unique in St. Mark account. Unlike the other Gospels, St. Mark tells how the colt was tied at a door outside in the street and how those standing there let them go.

Yet, the essential narrative is the same in all four Gospel accounts: as prophesied in the Old Testament: the people, even with their limited understanding, called out for Jesus to save them, and Jesus was present to save them.

Often In marches for a cause people are walking and shouting slogans back and forth. Yet, there seems to be one slogan or phrase they rally behind. In a pro-life rally they have many slogans but they rally around the one slogan: God Loves Life.

And so there are cacophonous spirit chants on this day. In the Palm Sunday Processional, the people chant their rally slogan at the beginning and the end of different chants. The "book end chant" is the word "Hosanna!" A Hebrew word that most Bible versions leave un-translated. Although arguably the word means "Save us now!"

By Jesus's time the word "Hosanna" had become a technical term used in the liturgy of the people from Psalm 118 (vv.25-26). It was used especially in processions going up to feasts such as Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, when leafy branches also would have been used. The worshiping crowd was calling for salvation. One side for salvation from Jesus, the other side for salvation in the form of His Kingdom. But both for salvation from the greatest trouble they faced, that is, from their sins.

Whether or not you and I always realize and remember, the greatest trouble we face by nature is from our sins, also. By nature we all are sinful from the moment of our conception, and for that original sin we deserve death here in time and punishment in hell for eternity. Even if we could set aside that original sin, we all commit countless actual sins, some arguably greater or lesser than others, but for any one of which we also deserve death in time and punishment in hell for eternity. Disobeying our parents or other authorities, not helping others in their physical needs or otherwise not honoring God's gift of life, not living sexually pure and decent lives in what we say and do or not honoring our spouse if we have one, not helping others improve and protect their possessions and income, not speaking well of others, not being content with what we have—all such sins have the potential of keeping us apart from God for eternity, being tormented in hell. Unless, we heed God's call to repent: to turn in sorrow from our sins, to trust Him to forgive our sins for Jesus's sake, and to want to do better than to keep on sinning. In other words – "Hosanna" – Save Us NOW!

The people who went before and those who followed Jesus to Jerusalem showed their repentance and faith in Him by spreading their cloaks on the road and proclaiming salvation comes through Him as the Messiah, the Christ.

God had provided the King, as described in today's Epistle Reading (Philippians 2:5-11), Who was in the form of God, but Who took the form of a servant, and Who humbled Himself to the point of death, even the shameful death on a cross.

As we re-enact today – what the people of Jesus's day did and said, we likewise subject ourselves to Him in repentance and confess our faith in Him unto forgiveness and also unto salvation.

For our forgiveness and salvation, that Palm Sunday God provided a colt for Jesus to ride in Glory before He will provide a Passover feast in the large upper room – later that week – furnished and ready for Jesus to eat the Passover with His disciples.

In the same way God continues to provide to save us. He does not present a colt tied at a door outside in the street, but He presents to us in bread and wine – His Body and Blood – to save us, us who are baptized with water and the Word, who sing "Hosanna!", and believe the Word of God for forgiveness and our salvation.

However, we dare not think that by re-enacting or singing songs of the ancient Church or speaking age old Scriptural quotes that we somehow merit our partaking of His resurrection. We should continue confessing that we, too, fail to follow Jesus's example so we pray, Kyrie Eleison (LORD have Mercy).

So, even with limited understanding, we continue to do and say what the Christian Church does and says. We pray the simple prayer "Hosanna!" – SAVE US NOW!, and He answers with salvation. No matter how tired we are, we call out to Him "Hosanna!", and He is present here. No matter how discouraged we are, we call out to Him "Hosanna!", and we receive Him here. No matter how many times we have sinned, we call out to Him "Hosanna!", and, He forgives all who repent and believe. Thus, not just Palm Sunday but every Sunday there is the Divine Service: God giving us salvation in the historic Christian liturgy of His Church.

Today we all were part of a Palm Sunday Procession with Palms. But we have ended with our minds and thoughts headed toward Holy Week and the happenings of Jesus last hours. Remember, He does this all for you. He will shed His Blood for our salvation. Our "Hosannas!" today will cry "Crucify" soon. Kyrie Eleison. Because of the blood of His covenant with us, we prisoners of hope have been set free by Him—the LORD Jesus Christ, Who now is exalted and bears the Name that is above every name, at Whose Name every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth. Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the LORD, and blessed is the coming Kingdom of our Father David!

Amen.