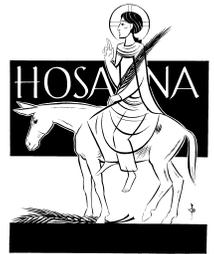


KING OF KINGS LUTHERAN CHURCH



Mark 11:9-10

Hosanna in the Highest!

Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

“Hosanna!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!”

“Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

Knowing what we know about Jesus from the Bible — that he died and rose to take away our sins and now rules the universe with perfect love — what would you say to him if he suddenly walked down the center aisle of this church? We might be tempted to fall at his feet and ask for a miracle to cure a loved one. Others may ask for him to resolve the many wars in the world and usher in an era of peace. Some might want to ask his help in a job hunt. Sadness and loneliness would probably be presented to him.

But for all the earthly requests we could make of Jesus, I would suggest that to simply say, “Hosanna” would be the right thing to say. “Hosanna” means “save.” Save us, Lord! That is what we need.

The people of Jesus’ day probably had similar, earthly thoughts about what they needed from the great prophet Jesus. Perhaps they wanted him to play the role of an earthly leader who would help them attain freedom from the Roman Empire. Many in Jesus’ day dreamed of that. Others probably had a more personal issue or problem. Still others may have wanted to hear Jesus teach.

But Jesus didn’t really address the earthly problems that many faced. He would do nothing about the Roman Empire. In fact, when accused before the Roman governor of being a king, Jesus would simply say, **“My kingdom is not of this world.”** Nor would Jesus perform any healing miracles during Holy Week (other than reattaching an ear when he was arrested). He had come to save, but earthly problems were not the matter he intended to address.

Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a day when, according to the Old Testament law, Israelite families were busy selecting their Passover lamb. It would be a few days until they killed the lamb, but they had to make the choice on the day we call Palm Sunday.

Jesus came to Jerusalem to present himself as the sacrifice. Like the Passover lambs in Egypt saved from the angel of death, Jesus had come to save. But he came to save us from the real problem that we face.

So often we think that the problem we face is the one right in front of us. Illness. Terrorism. A relationship that is stressed. A bad grade. Loneliness. One drink too many. A temper that got us in trouble again. Now, those are real problems. But they have a deeper root than just some bad luck, or a virus, or a bad choice.

Sin makes this world miserable. And while we all excel at making excuses for our own sins, they are real! Sin is why we are lazy, and people are disappointed in us. Sin is why we lash out in anger and damage a relationship. Sin is why we ignore the requests or needs of others. Sin is why we tell lies that dig deep holes. Sin is even the root cause of war, disease, and even death.

Jesus presented himself as the Passover Lamb for the sin of the world. He was there to die on the cross as the punishment that we deserved for our lifetime of sins. But his sacrifice would be so perfect that when he was done, he would be alive again. He would destroy sin and death. He would provide the much needed relief for the soul of knowing that we are forgiven before God and can live at peace with him.

We long for our recent set of troubles to be solved because we think that this world is our home. Jesus knew there was more and so he gave us more. His death is the freedom and forgiveness that we need to live out our years knowing of God's love and to live for eternity with him in heaven.

Those problems, that have lingered since the beginning, serve to remind us that there is more. Cure the latest disease and another will eventually catch up to you. End the war being fought today and before long another will be started. Find the perfect job, but it may not last. This world is broken. If this is as good as it gets, God might just be mean!

Jesus provides the cure. By faith in him, we are connected to the depth of God's love and the certainty of his presence. The problems may not go away because God can see that they remind us that we need more; but God is not going away either. A God who rides into Jerusalem to die, is not going to abandon us now . . . or ever.

And so with Jesus as a part of our lives, everything about our time here changed.

There is a parable that is told about the donkey that teaches us what it means to live as a follower of Jesus. The next morning the donkey awoke and was amazed at what had happened. He walked into town and found a group of people. "I'll show myself to them," he thought. But when he did, nothing happened. When he went to get water, no one paid any attention to him either. "Throw down your coats," he said. But he received only a slap on the tail and an order to move along. When he walked through the market, he was amazed that no one even looked at him. Hurt and confused, the donkey went home. "Foolish child," his mother said. "Don't you realize that without Jesus, you are just an ordinary donkey?"

Without Jesus, what are we? We are far less than we imagine ourselves to be. But with Jesus, we are part of an eternal kingdom of God's people. Our humble service matters before God because the people we serve matter to God.

"Hosanna." Save us, Lord. Save us from the crippling effects of our sins. Save us from lives that are miserable or meaningless. Save us from ever being separated from you or punished for our sins.

He has! This week, we offer to our Savior our humble praise for the fact that he has saved us. Sin's grip is broken and real, meaningful life is ours. Hosanna in the highest! Amen.

Palm Sunday
March 29, 2015

