

Passion Week
Luke 19:28-44
March 28, 2021

Today is Palm Sunday, the beginning of the Holy Week. Palm Sunday is the day we commemorate Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. As he approached the city on a donkey, the people welcomed him with palm branches and shouts of Hosanna. They shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!"¹

The word, "Hosanna," or "Hoshiya-na" in Hebrew, means "Please Save Us!" It is a cry for help. In 2 Kings 6, we read about the time when Aramean King Benhadad and his entire army surrounded Samaria, the capital city of Israel. It happened in the days of King Jehoram. At that time, there was a great famine in Samaria. As the siege continued, the famine became so severe that people ended up eating human flesh including their own children.

One day, as Jehoram, the king of Israel, was walking on the city wall, a woman cried out to him, "Help, my lord king!" When the king asked what she wanted, she said, "This woman said to me, 'Give up your son; let us eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.' So, we cooked my son and ate him. The next day I said to her, 'Give up your son and we will eat him.' But she has hidden her son."² Can you imagine the desperation? In this situation, this woman used the expression "Hoshiya Adonai" "Help, my lord!" Such cry is what "Hoshiya-na" is. It means "Please Save Us!" "Please Help Us!"

The Jews were shouting this cry as Jesus was coming toward Jerusalem. The meaning of this expression, however, has changed over the centuries. By the time of Jesus, "Hoshiya-na" came to mean, "Salvation! Salvation has come!"³ It has become a declaration of salvation more so than a plea for deliverance. So, the crowds were basically shouting, "The Messiah has come! Our salvation is imminent! Deliver us! Save us! Give us freedom, our independence!"

People were calling for a revolution. They expected Jesus to start a war against the Roman Empire. They hoped that Jesus would be their Messiah, the military leader they had been waiting for.

¹ Matthew 21:9; Mark 11:9-10; Luke 19:38.

² 2 Kings 6:24-30.

³ <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/hosanna>

There was a group of people in Israel at the time that were so committed to national independence that they would do anything to achieve it. They were passionate and aggressive, even violent and vicious. That group was called the zealots. The interesting thing is that two of Jesus' twelve disciples were zealots: Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot.

The Palm Branches had become the symbol of the zealot movement. So, when the people waved the Palm Branches, it was a call for an insurgence. This would be seen as a serious offense in the eyes of the Romans.

Roman government was very well aware of Messianic prophesies and Messianic movements. They knew that when Israel's Messiah came, he would come riding on a donkey, or colt (Zechariah 9:9). There had been others, before Jesus, who pretended to be the Messiah and had ridden on a donkey into Jerusalem. They did it to start an insurrection against the Romans. There had been many of such attempts, but every single time that happened, the Romans had destroyed them.

So, when Jesus was riding on donkey into the city and being welcomed by the masses with palm branches and shouts of "Hosanna", the Romans were nervous. The city was at the verge of starting a war. This was the reason why the Jewish religious leaders tried to stop this procession. Regardless, the people were expecting a revolution with Jesus as their leader.

But Jesus was coming into the city with a very different purpose. He came there to offer himself as a sacrificial lamb for God's ultimate salvation.

The Palm Sunday evening was the beginning of the Lamb Selection Day. The Jewish new day began at sunset, not at sunrise. Jesus came into the city late in the afternoon, possible early evening. So, when Jesus entered Jerusalem it was at the beginning of the Lamb Selection Day.

According to Exodus 12, the lamb was to be selected on the 10th day of the month of Nisan, the first month of Jewish calendar. The Palm Sunday evening was the beginning of the 10th day of Nisan in the days of Jesus. This was the day that the Jews would select a Passover lamb. On that day, the head of the family would select a lamb and take it to his home. When the lamb was brought home, it would be examined by everyone for blemish for the next four days. After a careful examination the lamb was slaughtered on the 14th day of Nisan.

When the crowd shouted “Hosanna,” and welcomed Jesus into their city, even though they did not realize it, they were actually welcoming the Passover lamb. Jesus was the sacrificial lamb who was chosen by God and brought into the house of God, the temple. Mark 11:11 says, “Then he (Jesus) entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.” He entered the temple, actually he was brought into the house of God, in the evening, at the beginning of the Lamb Selection Day.

He was in the temple every day for the next four days. He was in the midst of God’s people to be examined by them, and four days later, when the Passover lambs was slaughtered, he was crucified. He was slaughtered by the people who examined him and could not find any fault, any blemish in him. He was crucified to deliver them from their oppression, not from the military or political oppression, but from the spiritual and the evil oppression. However, this deliverance wasn’t just for the Israelites; it was for all humanity.

The gift of this deliverance is universal. Christ’s sacrifice, God’s gift of himself in Jesus Christ, is offered to all people. It is open to all people. But the privilege of having that deliverance only belongs to those who have faith in Jesus Christ. The salvation is offered to all; but receiving it, having it, and enjoying it only belong to those who come to Christ in faith. It is only through faith in Christ we are justified, and this justification is what the Christ’s crucifixion has accomplished.

In the early part of 1990’s, a 12-year-old girl, Tanya Gents, and her parents drove across five states and traveled 1,300 miles to thank the man who saved her life. Tanya traveled from Galveston, Texas, to Charlotte, North Carolina, through a record snowstorm in Tennessee. She and her parents were held up in Tennessee for two days because of the snowstorm but their trip to North Carolina was the most exciting and joy-filled journey. Tanya had one purpose in mind. She wanted to thank and hug and praise the man who gave her his bone marrow to cure her from leukemia. He was the only person who had a matching bone marrow, and he was willing share that. And he did. As a result, Tanya had a new life. Tanya put it this way, “It’s hard to thank somebody who gave you your life.”⁴

If you were Tanya, wouldn’t you feel that way? Yet that is exactly the position you and I find ourselves in. Christ’s crucifixion wasn’t just giving you a

⁴ "Four Pictures of God's Grace," by Robert W. Stackel, THE CLERGY JOURNAL, November/December 1993, p. 13.

pint of blood or small amount of bone marrow. It was one of the most cruel and excruciating deaths known to human being.

A pastor named, Robert Noblett, tells about an episode on the classic TV show *M*A*S*H*. Those of you who remember the show, the setting was during the Korean War. Hawkeye, the main character, is on a bus with some South Korean refugees. The bus comes very close to some North Korean soldiers. In order to hide from them, the driver drives the bus off the road and hides it behind some bushes. They are still within earshot of the North Koreans. There was a young South Korean mother who had an infant baby who starts to cry. Hawkeye directs the mother to keep the baby quiet. The crying stops immediately and the danger passes.

Later, Hawkeye discovers that the mother has actually killed the child so that the group will not be discovered.⁵ The mother had made an incredible and painful decision and had taken quick and decisive action which saved others.

A mother sacrifices her own child to save others. What if you were one of the persons in the bus and you were saved because she sacrificed her own child? How would you feel? What impact would it have on you? That is basically what happened in the holy week. A Father gives the life of His own Son for humanity's salvation. That is what this week is about. We are to reflect on that at least this week.

And as you do, may the loves of God, expressed in Christ's crucifixion, give you a new life in Christ Jesus!

⁵ <http://www.preaching.com/resources/sermons/11567320/archive4/>.