

Moore Presbyterian Churches
April 2, 2023
Palm Sunday



*Indicates to please stand as you are able.

God calls us to worship

Call to worship (*responsive*):

Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!

**Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
his steadfast love endures forever.**

*Hymn: #214 “All glory, laud and honour”

We respond in praise and confession:

*Prayer of praise and supplication:

(<https://bishopbillmcalilly.com/2013/03/24/palm-sunday-prayer/>)

O God,

*who has known the clamour of a thousand Palm Sundays
and the disappointment of a million crucifixions,
we bow in your presence
as those who have both affirmed and denied you,
and ask your forgiveness.*

*Give us your grace that we may learn
to live in affirmation and not denial.*

*Let the Spirit that was in Christ Jesus our Lord be in us
that we may say, Abba, Father
and walk in your righteousness.*

*Deliver us from false values,
from selfish desire
and the worship of things,*

*that we may not waste our lives on goals and objects
without eternal significance.*

*Guard us this week from betraying our Christ as Judas did,
and for a few pieces of silver or a promotion at the office
or a quick thrill or a cheap victory over an enemy.*

*Lead us daily to the garden of prayer,
that we may empty ourselves
and know your will and have the courage to do it.*

*Strengthen us for the betrayals and crucifixions we face,
that we may know in our own flesh and hearts and minds
the power of your resurrection.
Let grace overflow like a fountain in our lives,
nurturing affection for mercy and peace and goodness.
And guide us into the ministries of hearing and responding to all your little
ones.
These and all things we pray in the strong Name of Jesus who is the Christ.
Amen.*

Prayer of confession (*unison*):

**Merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed.
By what we have done,
and what we have left undone
we have not loved you
with our whole heart, mind, and strength;
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy forgive what we have been,
amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be,
so that we may delight in your will
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your holy name.
Amen.**

We hear the gospel of God's grace: Psalm 118:22-24; John 3:16-17

*Hymn: #216 "Hosanna"

God speaks to us:

READ: Zechariah 9:1-10, 16-17
Psalm 118: 1-5, 19-29
Matthew 21:1-11

(The response to: "This is the word of the Lord" is, "**Thanks be to God**")

Hosanna!

1. Today is Palm Sunday. It's the start of Holy Week. Today we read of Jesus entering Jerusalem for the Passover festival. As the week unfolds, we read that Jesus made a scene in the temple, taught his disciples about the kingdom of heaven on earth, instituted what we call the Sacrament of Holy Communion, was betrayed by one of his closest companions, arrested, tried by both religious and civic authorities, found guilty through miscarriage of justice, was denied by his closest friends, tortured, and crucified on Friday.

Five hundred years before Jesus entered the Holy City, the prophet Zechariah imagined a time when the true king of Israel, none other than the Lord God Himself, would arrive at the holy city on a donkey. He would be a good king. Just. Merciful. Righteous. Mighty. And he would command peace to the nations. Zechariah imagined that when this Godly King entered Jerusalem, things would be set right. The king would silence the enemies, would encamp around his house, protect his people, and renew the kingdom of heaven on earth.

Four hundred years before that (around 971 BCE), the son of the great King David was anointed as David's successor at the Gihon spring in the Kidron Valley between the Mt. of Olives and the eastern gate of Jerusalem. After his anointing, Solomon rode up from the valley and through the eastern gate of the city on David's mule.

When Jesus rode from the Mt. of Olives, through the Kidron Valley, and into the eastern gate of the Holy City, riding on a donkey, he followed the same coronation procession as did the first son of David, Solomon.

As we read the story, we realize that he was in complete control throughout the entire week.

Jesus choreographed everything to ensure that when He entered the city, the stage would be set for his arrest and then crucifixion.

Jesus knew how the people would respond. He knew that the cloaks strewn on his path were reminiscent of acts of homage paid to Israel's kings in the past. He knew that the branches waved in the air evoked memories of Israel's past rebellions against their oppressive lords and emperors (particularly when Israel was under the control of the Greek empire). He knew that such acts were intended to honour him

as rightful king of Israel. He knew such patronage would evoke the ire of the authorities.

Especially during this week.

This was the Passover week. Jerusalem was filled to overflowing with worshippers celebrating how God liberated their ancestors from their enslavement by the Egyptian empire. It was a week of remembering and celebrating the mighty acts of the Living God overthrowing the tyrants. Rome was, naturally, on guard this week for any disturbance that might provoke a riot. Equally, the religious authorities were on guard for any disturbance that might provoke the Romans into shutting down the festivities!

Jesus knew his actions would stir up both the religious and the civic authorities.

Jesus had carefully choreographed everything from his Palm Sunday entrance on a donkey to his Good Friday exodus on the cross.

In doing so, he had effectively removed the human element of what is needed for salvation. Sure, everything that happened that week depended on human emotions, thinking, and actions, but it was all choreographed to ensure that when He entered the city, the stage would be set for his arrest and crucifixion.

Salvation is mediated only by God's self, and only through the sacrifice of the cross.

2. We are in a mental health crisis.

Therapists and councillors are busy.

People are acting out. They're reacting physically and sometimes violently to the anxiety, the internal traumas, and the fear they feel yet cannot process and do not understand.

When guns are near at hand, it ends in tragedy.

When guns aren't, it also ends in tragedy with broken trust and increased distress.

We know as well that we are, globally, in a climate crisis. Many people are trying to endure economic crises, food crises, and political/human rights crises. We are collectively suffering an attention span crisis, drug crisis, and health care crises.

At times it seems we're not simply in a climate crisis but a crisis climate!

All of our human-devised systems, protocols, structures, platforms, engineering, and innovations – although they might help us in particular ways – cannot give salvation. They all fall short of what is needed. Often, we learn years later the inventions or systems we thought would be our salvation, prove to merely contribute to our distress.

3. The psalmist felt the distress of being hemmed in. He knew what it was to live with tightening lungs, heightened blood pressure, constricted muscles, and fearful minds.

He also knew the relief as when a pressure valve is released when the steadfast love of the Lord surrounds a person and sets you in a broad, spacious place.

Like the king who will “encamp at my house as a guard,” protect his people from all oppressors, and establish peace in his dominion, Jesus entered the city *in order* to go to the cross and defeat sin, death, and the devil.

As he entered the eastern gate, riding on a donkey, re-enacting the procession of King David's son Solomon and the vision of Zechariah, the crowds recognized him as the Son of David, the Messiah, the King. And the Saviour.

Jesus alone can open the gates of righteousness.

Jesus alone can become your salvation.

Only Christ. And only by the cross, does salvation come.

4. a) The crowds cried: Hosanna!

This is more than a generic utterance of praise.

Hosanna means “Help!”, or, “Save!”

The psalmist used this word in verse 25 of his prayer: “Save us, we beseech you, O Lord!”

Beseech comes from the Hebrew word _____ (‘an-nah) which is an urgent entreaty. It means something along the lines of “Now!”

Beseech doesn't mean “If you have a moment, lend us an ear.” It means to earnestly beg, or, supplicate, for help to be given right now.

“Hosanna! Save us, we beseech you, O Lord, thou Son of David!”

So often, when we ask God for help, we betray our doubt by couching our plea in a pious-sounding “If it’s your will.”

But there’s none of that in the cries of the crowds nor the prayer of the psalmist.

This is the Son of David who has entered our city. He is the one anointed by the dove of the Holy Spirit to rescue us, to reconcile us with our Father, to heal us, to save us, to restore God’s holy kingdom on earth as it is in heaven!

Their cry wasn’t: “Lord, if you have time, please save us.” Or, “Lord, if you want, if it’s your will, please help us.” It’s a demand, because of who we know God to be, because of what God has promised, that God save His children.

Faith assures us that it is God’s will to help us because Jesus went to the cross and has overcome sin, death, and the devil for us, in our place, and on our behalf.

So,

Hosanna to the Son of David!

It’s a cry against all the forces that are contrary to the Kingdom of God.

It’s a cry by the children of God who take refuge behind the shield of faith in Jesus.

It’s a cry of praise that honours Jesus as the King, the Son of David.

It’s an affirmation of trust that Jesus has become, and will continue to be, my salvation.

It’s an affirmation that He has and is able to answer my cries and set me in a broad place.

Hosanna! is an earnest plea for salvation that is rooted in the sincere trust that the Lord Jesus has become my salvation.

b) When you sing “Hosanna to the Son of David!” you are acknowledging that Jesus of Nazareth is the King, that he is your Lord; that he is the Messiah, and that by his cross he is your saviour.

When the people in the crowd threw their coats on the path, they did so to honour Jesus as King. They also surrendered to him their protective layers. They lay at his feet the guards they place around themselves, trusting that in Jesus they have all the refuge and safety they need.

When you sing “Hosanna to the Son of David!” you also confess that you are yielding to His grace, mercy, and will as revealed by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures.

When you sing “Hosanna to the Son of David!” you are confessing your readiness to lay at his feet and entrust into his care your burdens and your protective garments.

As we enter this holiest of weeks, are you prepared to sing “Hosanna!”? Are you prepared to honour Jesus as your King? Are you prepared to believe that he has opened the gates of righteousness and will set you on a broad place? Are you prepared to yield to him your protective garments and entrust him with your burdens; your anxieties, fears, illnesses?

We respond by affirming our faith, offering our tithes, and prayer:

Choir: "He came riding on a donkey"

*The Apostles' Creed

*Offering:

(Offering plates are presented at the Communion Table while congregation sings:)

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
praise him all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heavenly host;
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.**

Prayer of dedication

Prayers of thanksgiving, intercession, the Lord's Prayer:

God of courage and compassion,
as we follow Jesus toward the Cross this holy week,
we give you thanks that he faced his enemies with courage, not violence.
We are grateful he loved us enough to die for us,
bearing every pain and sorrow others inflicted.
In Christ we trust that your love has power in every situation,
even the most troubling or tragic.
So hear us as we bring to you the people and places facing trouble and tragedy
this day:

We pray for all struggling with poverty, sickness, or grief,
and any feeling overwhelmed by things beyond their control.

(Silence for 10 seconds)

Stay with them day by day and restore their hope and health:

Lord, in your mercy;

Hear our prayer.

We pray for people and places facing violence, war and corruption,
and all who fear for what this day may bring.

(Silence for 10 seconds)

Grant them courage and protection, and restore their hope and peace:

Lord, in your mercy;

Hear our prayer.

We pray for those who challenge tyranny, brutality and injustice,
and all who raise their voices for the vulnerable and victimized.

(Silence for 10 seconds)

Give them strength and restore their hope and freedom:

Lord, in your mercy;

Hear our prayer.

We pray for all who face persecution because of racism, belief or identity,
and for each one who has been shamed or humiliated by someone more
powerful.

(Silence for 10 seconds)

Assure them of their value as your children and restore their hope and dignity:

Lord, in your mercy;

Hear our prayer.

Hear us as we pray to you in silence for those situations close to our hearts this day.

(Silence for 10 seconds)

Bring your grace to restore hope and healing wherever they are needed.

Lord in your mercy;

Hear our prayer.

God of courage and compassion, thank you for your love that never lets us go and hear us as we pray the words Jesus taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

God sends us to serve and witness with God's blessing:

*Hymn: #217 "Ride on, ride on in majesty"

Benediction

Congregational Amen