

Hosanna

April 2, 2023

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When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, just say this, ‘The Lord needs them.’ And he will send them immediately.” ⁴ This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet: ⁵ “Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” ⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷ they brought the donkey and the colt and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” ¹⁰ When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?” ¹¹ The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.” (Matthew 21:1-11).

1. Another Incident

Last Monday there was a shooting at Covenant School in Nashville, Tennessee. Three children and three staff were killed by a former student. The adults were in their sixties and the children were nine. This is the 130th mass shooting in 2023. 19 of these shootings were at schools.

We don't know all the details, but families and friends of the children have told reporters staff would have done anything to keep the children safe. Among those killed, Katherine Koonce, the head of the school, died likely trying to save the children from the shooter.

2. Hosanna

In today's passage, Matthew 21, we find the crowd asking Jesus to save them. In verse 9, the crowd shouts, ***“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!”***

Hosanna is a Greek word. This word is from the Hebrew word “*hosi-a-na*.” This term is found in Psalm 118:25. It means “***Lord, save us.***” The psalmist prayed for the salvation and prosperity of the people. Who is “***the son of David***” in this passage? The literal meaning of “the son of David”

would be Solomon. But here, the term “the Son of David” refers to “**the coming Messiah.**”

The psalmist says in Psalm 118:26, “**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**” The crowd in Matthew’s Gospel is referring to the same passage in Psalms 118. Jesus is the descendant of David, and the crowd praises him as the coming of the Messiah. Jesus would save God’s people and the people welcomed Jesus and hoped to be free from the Romans.

3. Palm Sunday

Today is “Palm Sunday.” Today we celebrate Jesus’ triumphal entry to Jerusalem. What happened to Jesus when he entered Jerusalem? Jesus and the disciples came from Bethphage on the southeastern slope of the Mount of Olives. Jesus asks the disciples to go to the village and find a donkey and a colt and bring them to him.

Jesus says, “**If anyone says anything to you why you bring the donkey and colt, tell them, the Lord needs them and immediately he will send them.**”

What would you do if you were one of the disciples? Can you imagine taking the animals and the owner just letting you take them without any objection?

We don’t know how this whole situation came to be, but what we do know is that two disciples went to the village and followed Jesus’ saying. Why did Jesus ask for a donkey and a colt instead of a horse? It is because a horse was a symbol of victory in war, while a donkey was the animal used for a peaceful parade.

Matthew tells us that Jesus riding on a donkey is the fulfillment of the prophecy by Zechariah. Zechariah 9:9 says, “**Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**”

By quoting Zechariah, Matthew tells us that Zechariah 9:9 is the prophecy of the coming Messiah and Jesus is God’s promise fulfilled. The Messiah was to bring peace and gentleness. Matthew says that Jesus is that Prince of Peace.

When the disciples brought the donkey and colt, they laid their clothes on the donkey and let Jesus sit on them. Jesus didn’t ride both animals at once, but switched between the colt and donkey along the way.

The people were excited to see Jesus. Who were these people in Jerusalem? They were those who traveled from different regions to celebrate Passover. Some knew of Jesus. They had many expectations

from the Messiah. Others didn't know anything about Jesus. They likely wondered who Jesus was.

4. Who is This?

Verse 10 in our passage tells us, when Jesus entered Jerusalem, ***“The whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?”*** Jesus spent most of his time in Galilee. The people from different regions would want to know about Jesus. Those accompanying Jesus said, ***“This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”***

What would you tell someone if they asked you, who Jesus is? Most Christians struggle when it comes to explaining Jesus' death and his resurrection. The Jews have no concept of the Messiah dying. The Messiah was to be sent by God to reign in God's kingdom forever.

The Bible tells us that dying on the cross was not what Jesus wanted. Jesus prays at Gethsemane, ***“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will”*** (Matthew 26:39). Although Jesus may not fully understand why he had to die, he is willing to do anything to follow God's will. Paul tells us the meaning of crucifixion: ***“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*** (Romans 5:8). In Verse 10, Paul says, ***“while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son.”***

What does the resurrection of Jesus mean to us? In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says that the resurrection of Jesus is the basis for the believer's hope for resurrection and encourages us when we face all kinds of trouble and persecution. In other words, Jesus died and was risen for you and me.

5. Jesus Predicted His Death

The disciples did not understand the death of Jesus. But we need to remember that Jesus predicted his death three times. Jesus first does this when Peter says at Caesarea Philippi, ***“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”*** (16:16). The second time is when the three disciples see Jesus transfigured on the mountain top. Finally, when Jesus goes to Jerusalem, he tells the disciples that he would be betrayed and crucified.

Why does Jesus tell the disciples about his death several times? It is because Jesus didn't want the disciples to believe that Jesus was a false prophet. Jesus also did not want them to think that he had no power to defeat those who would attack him.

6. Conclusion

Today we celebrate Palm Sunday and Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. This coming week is called "the Holy Week." This Thursday evening, we will gather to remember Jesus' Last Supper with the disciples. On Friday our elders and leaders will share their reflections and testimonies on Jesus' last seven words on the cross. Ben will share with us the music he made for Friday night. We gather on Friday because Jesus was crucified at 9 a.m. on Friday.

Next Sunday we will celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus' resurrection made a major difference in human history. Without the resurrection of Jesus, there would be no Christianity and no church. Paul says, "***if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵ More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either.***" Paul assures us that there are many witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus.

As followers of Jesus, we believe that death is not the end of our lives. Through the resurrection of Jesus, all followers of Jesus are not afraid of dying. We have hope for eternal life with the Lord, which we all receive through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

7. Application

The shooting at Covenant School is a reminder of our lives. Although several people died in the incident, we are reminded that all of us will one day pass on through death. Young people are known for living life as if death does not exist. However, we all learn over time that death will impact the lives of every person in the world.

There is a book by Rob Moll called, "***The art of Dying: Living fully into the life to come.***" I really encourage you to read this book. It changed my perspective on death. Now I can even be grateful for death.

Most of us find ourselves in a state of loss as we approach death. But when we reflect on the lives of the disciples, we see that they were not afraid of dying. Why was this? It is because they had confidence that a physical death would not be the end for them. They believed the life to come after death.

Jesus does not guarantee us safety, prosperity, or constant happiness in this life. We will all face troubles and challenges. Yet even in loss or trouble, we can still shout "Hosanna" and praise the Lord for giving us the hope that we have through Christ Jesus. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, we praise God and have hope in our Savior. Amen.