

It was springtime in Jerusalem: Sunshine and a light breeze, palm leaves and a Savior: It was the first Palm Sunday. God's light shone brightly on that Sunday as the people gathered around Jesus. They needed him, for their hearts were blistered with much pain and their minds were filled with many contradictions. They had longed for, they had prayed for God's intervention, and they had waited. They waited under the oppressive hand of the Romans and the crushing weight of sin. This morning we're going to talk about what this meant to the people in Jesus' day and what it means for you and me in our walk with God and with each another.

OPENING PRAYER

JOHN 12:12-19

The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" ¹⁴ And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, ¹⁵ "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!" ¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. ¹⁷ The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. ¹⁸ The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. ¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."

On that first Palm Sunday, a spiritual storm was brewing, a storm between the forces of good and evil, between God and the devil. Its distant rumblings could be felt. For despite the sense of celebration among the people as Christ entered the Holy City, the enemies of Jesus muttered among themselves, looking for ways to destroy him.

But none of those gathered around Jesus waving palm branches wanted to believe it. They didn't want to let go of this moment of joy on this lovely spring day when they welcomed into their city the Messiah on a donkey. Life was good.

But the storm was near, nonetheless. The Pharisees eyed those people who followed Jesus, and said, "**Look, the world has gone after Him.**" But the people cried out, "**Hosanna!**" which means "save us." That's what they wanted: Salvation. It's what we all long for: Relief from the pain we feel in our hearts, from the distress we experience in our minds, and from the fear that simmers in our souls. "**Hosanna!**" Say it with me. ("**Hosanna!**")

In the day, a king rode a great horse into a city if he had conquered it by force. But if the people had chosen to submit to his authority in peace, he would come to them on a donkey. For Jesus, the people laid their coats and palm branches before the donkey on which he rode, for they desired nothing more than that he would be their king of peace.

Israel had been under the tyranny of other nations for over 750 years. They longed for peace, the peace God had promised their father Abraham. Indeed, God's promise of redemption was imprinted on their hearts, written in their DNA. When they saw Jesus, they saw the personification of the promised work of God in their midst. He had confronted the authorities who had enslaved them; he had preached a message of love and joy and forgiveness; he had healed the sick, given sight to the blind, and he had raised the dead.

Death: Man's last enemy and Jesus had defeated it. Indeed, Jesus was the embodiment of eternal life. "**Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!**"

But the dark clouds were rolling in. The rains would come, and the winds would tear through the land, that the devil, the world, and even man's sinful nature would rip him away from the very heart of God.

Indeed, there are many things in us and around us that would snatch from our hearts the joy we have in being alive, the joy that only a creature bound for eternity can know.

Some of us can't watch the news anymore because of how it oppresses our spirits. And some of us can't help but watch it for fear that the world will spin out of control and we'll miss out on something we need to know to save ourselves!

Some of us are tied up in relationships that are strangling the life out of us, relationships we know we should've let go of a long time ago. And there are others among us with a relationship problem we know we should've fixed, which won't be right until we get after it.

But this is the Good News: Jesus threw himself into the eye of our storms for our salvation, for the salvation of all humanity, and we cry out, "**Hosanna!**" Say it with me: ("Hosanna!")

In our mind's eye and in our hearts we stand in the midst of this crowd on that first Palm Sunday that welcomed Christ into the Holy City. For our King is with us: Our king who blesses us with peace in our hearts despite the insanity all around us is with us; our king who fills our homes with light despite our feelings of inadequacy is with us; our king who provides everything we need between now and eternity despite our doubts, he is with us, and he gives us the victory in his own love and we cry out, "**Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel!**"

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we shall not be consumed by the storms of life, for we know how the story ends, that Christ died to end death and he rose from the grave to usher in eternal life. There's nothing to fear. Nothing in our lives nor in the world can take from you and me what God has already given us through his son, Jesus.

This week as we continue our march to the Cross may you be filled with a sense of thankfulness for what King Jesus did for you, singing in your heart, "**Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel!**"

This week may you be lifted up in your spirit, filled with confidence, knowing that nothing can take away from you what King Jesus has already given to you.

And this week may you have the opportunity to share this Good News with another person who really needs to hear it, in the name of the Lord. Amen.