

Lent 6 (4/5/09 – Christ’s Passion – The True Hosanna)

In the Name of JESUS. [Amen]

As one of my fellow pastors put it: “*Hosanna* is the word of the day.” *Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna! Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!*” All glory, laud, and honor to You, Redeemed, King, to Whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring. *Hosanna* in the highest. Not to mention the triple *Hosanna* that we will sing twice during the *SANCTUS*. Yes, *Hosanna* is the word of the day.

But what was that *large crowd that had come to the feast* saying when they spoke that word [JN 12.12,13]? And what do **we** mean when we say, *Hosanna* – since it’s not one of our everyday words.

The word comes to us from the Hebrew through the Greek of our text. The Hebrew way of saying it is: *Hoshi’ah-na*. The word occurs in PSALM 118.25, where it is translated: *save now, I pray*. This is one of the Psalms, incidentally, that would have been sung as part of the Passover celebration ... one of the Psalms Jesus and His disciples were singing on their way to the Mount of Olives. And this makes the multitude’s use of the word here on *Palm Sunday* all the more meaningful, really.

For all their fickleness and wrongheadedness, this mob actually gets this right – ironically. We will remember on Friday – as Jesus is brought before Pilate by the Jewish leaders – that many of this same crowd who today are crying out, *Hosanna! Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord*, will be just as enthusiastically yelling: *Crucify Him! Crucify Him!* But just like the words of the high priest, Caiaphas, in JN 11.49–50 were actually prophetic – though he meant it for evil when he said: *You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.* – so the fickle words of the crowd serves to teach the reality that *Christ’s Passion is The True Hosanna*. Let us, then, consider this blessed truth on this dual Sunday – the Sunday called both *Palm Sunday* and *Sunday of the Passion*.

As we heard in our first Gospel Reading – before our *Palm Sunday Procession* – a large crowd gathered outside the city walls to greet our Lord Jesus with great exuberance ... some shouting ... some throwing down palm branches to “pave the way” for Him Who had raised Lazarus from the dead. These were exciting times! Many thought Jesus was the Messiah – the Anointed One – Who would deliver them from the tyranny of Roman rule. But as we have heard before, they thought of Him in worldly terms. Though He comes humbly – riding on a donkey rather than the victor’s steed – they were looking for Christ to throw off the yoke of

Rome by force. *If this Jesus of Nazareth can raise a man four days dead, surely He can lead us out of our servitude ... surely He can restore Israel to the glorious days of David ... and Solomon.* That's what the crowds were thinking. And the Pharisees didn't like it one little bit. They had been plotting how to put Jesus to death [JN 11.53] – though they thought surely not during the Feast ... because they didn't want to get the crowds against them [MK 14.2]. When Jesus proved **NOT** to be the kind of Messiah – Deliverer ... Savior – they were looking for, then they were happy to side with their Jewish leaders and have Jesus put to death. *If You can't deliver the goods ... deliver us, then begone with You ... for good. We'll let those we wanted You to rid us of get rid of You!*

Quite often we behave not much differently! We turn to the Lord for aid – speaking words of praise in anticipation of a grand deliverance. But when it doesn't happen in the way we want ... when we want ... to the extent we want – well, begone with You, Lord; I'll do it my own way ... with my own strength ... or with the help of someone else. We do it all the time – unfortunately – this type of sin. We pray to God for health – either for ourselves or for a loved one or friend; but if God doesn't respond promptly ... give healing to the extent we want ... or worse yet, lets us or a loved one or a good friend suffer with debilitating illness ... cancer – well, do we not begin to wonder **if** God really hears us ... **if** God really cares ... **if** God can really do miracles (like the Scriptures says He can)? We pray to God for work ... a resolution to our financial troubles – but we still struggle ... and the economy keeps declining ... unemployment keeps rising. We long for reconciliation with family ... or friends – but it doesn't come ... our home is still in turmoil ... we still fight ... we're still not talking to each other. Don't we often fall into doubt? Don't our shouts of *Hosanna* become mumblings and grumblings against God? And our faith can become weak ... struggling ... fallen. And we sin ... like that fickle crowd that later called for Jesus' death by crucifixion. Our eyes a blinded ... our hearts hardened.

Hoshi'ah-na! Hosanna! O LORD, save us, now, we pray! [PSA 118.25]

Now the words of our second *Gospel Reading* come right after what we heard at the beginning. As I mentioned in Bible Study last Sunday, John – who wrote his Gospel last ... 30–40 years after the other Gospels – doesn't always put everything exactly in chronological order ... but sometimes instead groups some things together because one event gives us a right understanding of the other. And it seems that is just what John does here. From the other Gospel accounts we get the impression that Jesus went right to the temple after entering triumphantly on *Palm Sunday* – and later (a day or so later) cleansed the temple of moneychangers and sellers (a second time). The other Gospels don't mention the Greeks who came seeking Jesus ... nor Jesus' words immediately afterward. But John does. And the

Holy Spirit gives us this so that we might rightly understand just what it means to say to Jesus: ***Hosanna!*** It is a prayer for deliverance ... a prayer for salvation ... that can be answered in one way and in one way only – namely, by the Cross ... by Jesus’ crucifixion ... by His death and grave ... which is to say, by His Passion.

Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth – that is, when Jesus is lifted up and crucified on the Cross – ***will draw all people to Myself*** [JN 12.21–32]. In verse 33 John adds this inspired commentary: ***He said this to show by what kind of death He was going to die.*** And then the crowd responds to Jesus’ prediction about His Cross: ***We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can You say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?*** [12.34]

Christ’s Passion is The True Hosanna! It is precisely – **and only** – by Christ’s suffering and death on the Cross that the Lord Jesus will save. And not just the fickle multitude that shouted and waved palm branches as He humbly traveled on His way to sorrow, pain, and death – but **everyone** ... you ... me ... the whole world ... including the chief priests, Pharisees, and scribes who plot to kill Him ... including Pilate who sentences Him to crucifixion for political expediency ... including the soldiers who mock and mercilessly flog Him ... then nail Him to the cruel Cross and watch Him die ... **everyone** ... every last one ... no matter how horrible their sin!

Hoshi’ah–na! Hosanna! O LORD, save us, now, we pray! Save us from our doubting Your care and goodness toward us! Save us from our guilt and shame! Save us from our selfishness! Save us from our anger and unkind – even mean and hateful – words! Save us from our sins! Save us from eternal death ... save us from separation from You!

And just as surely as the Lord Jesus Christ entered into Jerusalem to take the rejection and condemnation ... to receive the mocking and spitting ... to feel the blows and whip and piercing nails through His hands and feet ... to be forsaken by the Father as He poured out on the Son His righteous wrath against all our sins ... to die in excruciating pain and loneliness ... then be buried in the grave – just as surely as the Lord Jesus entered into Jerusalem to suffer His Passion ... so surely does the Lord Jesus come to us with all the fruits of His Passion (and the Resurrection we celebrate next Sunday) ... to assure us that all, all is finished now ... and to pour out upon us (into our hearts and minds through our ears ... into our bodies and souls through our mouths) the blessed salvation that He once-for-all worked on the Cross that ***Good Friday!***

Here we have heard our Savior speak: ***The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the***

earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ... Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world – that is, the devil – be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself. Like a most-blessed grain of wheat – first lifted up ... then buried in the grave – Christ fell to the earth and died ... so that He might **not** remain alone as the Son of God ... but instead might through His Passion yield forth the wholesome, life-giving fruit of His salvation and deliverance and bear much fruit ... in bringing many sons (and daughters) into His Kingdom of Light. He has come into our midst this day ... lifted up high before the eyes of faith to draw us unto Himself ... to give us the ultimate answer to our prayer. ***Christ's Passion is The True Hosanna!*** His suffering and death are your true salvation – both now ... and even forever unto life everlasting. And He gives it all to you ... today! The ruler of this world is cast out of your life – Christ has entered in. ***Hoshi'ah-na! Hosanna! O LORD, save us, now, we pray!*** By His Passion Christ has once-for-all ... and does also now save you by His Gospel!

In the Name of the FATHER and of the + SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]