

There are times when the enormity of the Passion Gospel, in all its stark simplicity, pushes us to our knees in holy reverence and godly fear, especially when we take the opportunity to hear it in its entirety. Its story sweeps across the emotional landscape of our lives, from the joy of the Triumphal Entry to the love and fear of the Last Supper, to the grief, betrayal, and pain of the cross.

The Gospel, which will be read in parts today by various members of the congregation, depicts multiple responses to the person and work of Christ. And they mirror for us much of what our own imperfect responses to Christ look like. It is seen in **Peter's weakness. It is seen in the disciples' fearfulness, Pilate's self-interest, Caiaphas' lack of principle, Herod's triviality, the crowd's fickleness, and Judas' love of money and hardness of heart.** Through their stories, the masks over our own hearts are ripped away. We, too, find that our hearts are divided. I am like the crowd. I am like Peter. I am like Judas. And consequently, we need our Lord to save and help us. This need for help is the cry of Palm Sunday, when the crowd along the roadside shouted, "Hosanna! "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"<sup>1</sup>

The word, Hosanna, was an expression used in Hebrew as a cry for help.<sup>2</sup> In contemporary language, it means, "**Save us now!**" It was a prayer for God's blessing upon the Messiah who would bring to pass the salvation promised to Israel through the prophets and fulfilled through his suffering servant.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 19:38 and Mark 11:9

<sup>2</sup> Strong's Concordance, #5614, hosanna, save, we pray

This confident cry for help was to the one who would bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. It was through him that God would overcome all the pain and misery that burdens this sinful world. This is the story that changes everything, and the enormity of its love begs a response.

The one who came to Jerusalem humbly riding on a donkey now comes to us. Will we welcome him? Will we enter Holy Week not as mere observers but as participants? In other words, will we worship him? Will we serve him? May the shout of Hosanna be our heartfelt cry today as we begin the contemplation of these mighty acts that not only bring life and immortality but also “peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven!”<sup>3</sup> Amen.

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 19:38