

## **“HOSANNA! NOW... AND FOREVER!”**

Sermon Text – John 12:12-13

Sun., March 28, 2010

Palm Sunday / Sunday of the Passion

Processional Gospel Lesson – John 12:12-19

Old Testament Lesson – Deut 32:36-39

Epistle Lesson – Philippians 2:5–11

Gospel Lesson (Passion Narrative acc. to St. Luke) – Luke 23:1-56

Zion Lutheran Church, Beecher, IL

In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. [Amen.]

The title of today's sermon is “Hosanna! Now... *and Forever!*”

It's based on that from St. John's Gospel which was read at the entrance to the church. Here are the first two verses again: **The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup>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!”** (Jn. 12:12-13 ESV)

Dear friends in Christ Jesus,

Good friends of our family once took a trip to New York City. While there, they went to the set of the *Today* show – NBC television's morning talk and news show. You're at least vaguely familiar with it, I'm sure.

Usually, at some point in the show, the hosts: Matt Lauer, Meredith Vieira, and Al Roper, the weather guy, go outside the studio to broadcast segments of the show from the street.

If you've ever watched this, you've noticed that whenever the cameras pan the crowd of people gathered along the barricades, the people really “whoop it up” when they know that they're on camera. They scream... hold up signs saying something like: “Hi Mom!” and while waving at the camera move their head around hoping to be seen on national television.

Our friends told us that it was interesting to watch the people in the crowd react to the cameras. They said that when the cameras *weren't* running, the people just stood there kind of like “bumps on a log.” They *couldn't* have cared less about what was going on.

But, again, whenever the cameras were rolling... and the crowd knew that they were “on stage...” they turned on their enthusiasm hoping again that the camera operator would zoom-in on them! It was like the people were hot or cold – turning on... *or turning off* – their enthusiasm, totally dependent on what was expedient for them!

I thought of our friends' story when I began preparing this message. I saw a parallel to what happened to Jesus on that first Palm Sunday when He triumphantly rode into Jerusalem. You heard it when it was read a few minutes ago... [The people in the city] “...took branches of palm trees and went out to meet [Jesus], crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!”

On queue, the people went wild over Jesus saying: “**Hosanna!**” (which, by the way, means “**save now!**”) They were all excited about Him, kind of like the people on the set of the *Today* show, who “whoop it up” whenever the cameras are switched on.

But, as we heard in the Passion Narrative from St. Luke’s Gospel, the people in Jerusalem soon traded their cries of “**Hosanna!**” for something quite the opposite! When it was no longer convenient or expedient for them, their enthusiasm went *to nothing!*

Sadly... in just over 100 hours... by Friday of that week... the throngs of people who’d been so enthusiastic about Jesus on Palm Sunday were screaming for Him to die! “**Crucify, crucify Him!**” would be their words when Pilate would ask them what he ought to do with Jesus!

*How quickly...* their attitude changed toward Him. That happened because they expected something from Jesus that He wasn’t bringing to them then. John tells us that the crowd was well aware that Jesus had previously raised Lazarus from the dead. And now, as Jesus entered Jerusalem, they expected more of the same. Like so many before them, they wanted a king who would handle all their *earthly* needs... someone who would provide medical healing... food for the body... and, of course, someone who would take political control of their nation... kick the hated Romans out of Israel... and restore their nation to the superpower status that they’d enjoyed under David and Solomon.

But, again, by Friday morning, it was no longer expedient for them to cheer for Jesus; rather, they thought it to be more to their benefit to have Him crucified!

How is it with you?

Could you... *also*... be like those who lined the streets of Jerusalem... and switch on your enthusiasm toward God, “whooping it up” when Christ is mentioned... that is *if* you consider it expedient to do so?

And can’t you *also*... in the blink of an eye... flip that same switch off, if you perceive that God doesn’t deliver the goods to you... just as *you* demand... and in the time frame that *you* stipulate?

A moment ago I asked: “**How is it with you?**” But I really didn’t need to ask that question, did I? That’s because we all know the answer to that question. We all know how we would’ve acted had we been in Jerusalem during that first Holy Week some 2000 years ago.

To be sure, we would’ve been among those with palm branches shouting “**Hosanna...**” smiling and waving as Jesus rode by on that young donkey!

And, *we also know* that by Friday morning we certainly would have been front and center at Pilate’s house shouting again... but *this* time shouting: “**Crucify, crucify Him!**” with our Sunday smile changed to a sneer... and our open-hand wave now turned into a fist!

We would have done that, because in our spoiled, me-first, sinful frame of living life... we naturally reject the type of Savior that Jesus is. Yeah, we want a god that jumps to

our drumbeat... who serves as our own personal vending machine... giving us what we want *and* when we want it... and if he doesn't deliver, get rid of him *by whatever means necessary!*

But dear Christians, consider this. Knowing all this was going to happen, Jesus "rode on" into Jerusalem. He rode into Jerusalem "**to die**" as we sang. With each step that the donkey took, He was one step closer to horrid agony of His body and a cruel rejection by those who smiled, waved, and shouted for joy as He went past!

But He resolutely went forward... determined to do what their prayer of "**Hosanna!**" asked of Him. He would indeed, "**Save now!**" Oh yeah, the salvation that He brought would be *different* from what they desired and expected... but it would be *just what they needed!*

That's the way it is for *us* as well.

Jesus knows... *He always knows*... what's best for us. He saves us in His way and in His time. He saves us from all our enemies... particularly from ourselves... from our sins.

Jesus entered Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday with you in mind. He entered that city to die, to die for you and in your place on the cross because of your sins. And He has entered your life in your Baptism, claiming you as His own... granting you His grace, His love, His forgiveness in those blessed waters.

He continues to enter into your life through His Word – spoken... read... and even sung in our gorgeous hymns.

And He enters your life in His Supper – giving Himself for you to eat and drink, thereby providing you with pure Gospel – forgiveness of sins and a strengthening of faith so that you might continue on as a beloved one of His.

Dear Christians, today... on each day of Holy Week... *and on every day for the rest of your lives*, remind yourselves that Christ Jesus through Word and Sacrament triumphantly proclaims: "**I've answered your 'hosannas...' I've saved you now and forever!**" Thanks be to God! [Amen.]

May the peace of God, which passes all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. [Amen.]