

A Sermon for DaySpring Baptist Church

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“A Changing Hosanna”

John 12: 9-19

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Have you... would you... ever scream, **“save me,”** at the top of your lungs? That’s what the word hosanna originally meant, you know, “save me, save us.” Along the way, it changed and it came to be more of a praise than a plea.

Its first usage was different...

More of a desperate kind of feel to it.

“Save us.”

I don’t think I’ve ever yelled that... except maybe to the place kicker at the end of overtime... or when the Rockets were playing Orlando in the finals and Kenny Smith had to make some free throws and then a three pointer.

Who screams **“save us?”**

Who says **“save me”** and really knows they need it?

Like when there’s no other way out.

You’re in trouble and you know it.

A mom at home with preschoolers might say it... maybe even scream it. Especially if there were triplets in their terrible twos... I’ll bet she’d scream **“save me”** and really mean it.

Or maybe a grad student... up late finishing a paper and the hard drive goes on the blink. You’d probably hear someone screaming **“save me”** at the top of his lungs... at least I hope that’s what he’d be screaming.

People who avoid long bread lines in Baghdad for fear there might be a suicide bomber... they say **“save me”**, I’ll bet. I’m certain you heard it coming from the gulf coast last August... That’s what we heard, thousands screaming, **“save me.”**

“Save me,” is what you holler when you’re desperate. And any cynical or overly sophisticated theology goes right out the window. When it’s your child who’s sick and suffering or when you hear their stomach growl as you tuck them in at night and there’s nothing you can do to stop it, you’re just going to cry out to God, **“Save us.” “Do something.”**

Some of you have said that.

And some of you have heard that cry in your family coming from someone who is addicted and who has finally gotten to the bottom and they’re finally admitting that their life is out of control and that they are powerless to change it. Usually after a lot of trying and lying... you hear those words.

You ever said them? And I don’t just mean on Sunday morning in some litany... I mean in some moment where you’ve exhausted all your “trying and lying?”

Couldn’t fix the marriage?

Weren’t up to some challenge life threw your way?

Knew there were just too many balls in the air?

Or was it in that moment when you finally realized you weren’t going to tweak your way to God. ... You know the moment I’m talking about.

You'd read all Dr. Phil had to say... been to some support groups... did your part at church... said your prayers and still you were broken and inside you're thinking, "**The things I want to do, I just can't do and the things I don't want to do, I just keep on doing... over and over and over. God, save me!**"

It's an important place to get to in life... whatever takes you there... to be able to finally say it. To let go and say "**hosanna... God save me.**"

It's the one necessary thing. ... To be able to admit you're not enough.

As long as you think you're enough...

as long as you're satisfied with you...

as long as you've got some more tricks up your sleeve...

You won't say it. You won't see and admit to your own emptiness. You won't really get the whole repentance thing... it won't make any sense to you.

There's a reason Jesus said often that rich folks were going to have trouble entering the kingdom. Too self-sufficient... Too much self-help and self-fulfillment and self-actualization. Jesus said, "*The self-actualized don't need a savior.*" (That's a translation from the NRRLB... the New Revised Really Living Bible.)

Self-sufficient people never so much as whisper, "**Save Me**" much less yell it out in public.

On that first Palm Sunday, there was a lot of that going on. I'm sure there were lots of rubber-neckers... folks just running up to curbside and doing the mob thing... just because human beings are prone to that. Something primal in us is drawn to the mob. That's always a part of a palm Sunday reality... Just loosing the self in a sea of screaming, a moment when all the boundaries come down. That was going on there inside the Holy City... in Holy Week.

But there were lots of folks there who really did need to be saved

and they wanted Jesus to save them...

and save them as king.

That's why they grabbed the palm branches. Sort of first century sign language for "there's a new king in town."

And it's so interesting because in John there are no preparations for the moment. No sending of a disciple to find a colt. You've just got this momentum building.

The one who turned water to vintage wine...

Who healed a lame man and a blind guy...

Who fed 5000...

Has now raised someone from the dead and he's coming to town and everyone who wants to be saved has grabbed a palm branch.

That's the way it plays out in John.

And there Jesus is and he sees the fanfare and the palm branches and hears them yelling, "**hosanna... blessed is the king of Israel...**" Soooooo... he grabs the nearest donkey. That's the movement in John.

The folks go wild with need and expectation and Jesus climbs up on a donkey and sat there... John says, "**Your king is sitting on a little donkey.**"

Well... is he there to save them or not?

Is he there to be their king or not?

And we know the answer... Just like his disciples on this side of "*the cross, the grave, and the skies*" (as the hymn writer put it) we know what the answer is... We know, on this side of his glorification.

There's that important word. Jesus being glorified is one movement with three parts. It's like shooting a basketball.

There's the stance and holding the ball in the right way.

There's letting it fly...

And there's the follow through...

And all of them are a part of the shot.

Glorification is one movement with three parts.

Jesus being lifted up on the cross and from the grave and into eternity... is what John means when he says, **"after he was glorified, they got it."**

They knew the answer and the answer was **"Yes, he has come to save you... you cried out and here he is. Now, how he saves you and what salvation looks like is going to be different than you think it is... and the question will be, 'Are you still yelling Hosanna at the end of the day and what will that mean?'"**

I wonder what happened when Jesus hopped up on that donkey? They were using their palm-branch-sign-language and he used his donkey-riding-sign-language... (sort of a conversation going on...)

Did the Hosannas die... awkwardly fade away like the fun at a party when someone pulls some faux faux (sp?)? Is that what happened? Does Jesus bring the party to a halt in John's gospel by sitting on a donkey? Palm branches falling left and right... Hosannas changing to "huhs?"

I don't know what happened then... Maybe they just kept screaming "save us", desperate as they were. Who knows... if they were like we are, they were probably there on the front row of this Palm Sunday parade because they really believed Jesus had something to offer them.

Don't you? Isn't that why you're here? You didn't come here screaming hosanna today. But you offer if, don't you??

Hoping for something from Jesus.

And that's good.

We've already said... **"Hosanna... please save me,"** and is something we all have to pray somewhere along the way. But I'm just wondering, does our hosanna ever change? Is it ever transformed to an expression of praise?

We all have to begin with "help me."

"Save me, I'm sick... a sinner."

Save me, I'm oppressed..."

This is the hosanna with which we all begin... I'm wondering, though, if we ever move passed that.

If ten years from now we're still standing up on the curbside with an old worn-out palm branch basically asking what's in it for me... seems like maybe we'll have missed something.

Does Hosanna ever just get offered because it's God? God for God's sake? That's where this journey is taking us. It may begin... with our need...

"I need rescuing... healing..."

I need meaning in my life...

Peace in the midst of this madness..."

It does begin there... but if we set out on the path... If we leave the curbside and follow Jesus, then at some point "hosanna" becomes a different word for us.

And we stop loving God because of something. We love because of Faith.

"I've got my health..."

I got out of that jam...

got my prayers answered...

my questions resolved.” That’s all Hosanna because of what

happens to me.

Have you ever read... really read the book of Job? Remember Job; everything that can fall to pieces does fall to pieces. And chapter after chapter, the story asks “**why?**” “**How come?**” “**Make some sense of this, please?**”

Job however, is not there at story’s end with answers... or meaning... or explanation... He is only there with God. God... for the sake of God.

The people who, along the way, the journey, find that their hosannas have moved from “save me” to “bless you” and are those who have come to see and know God. Awe... and amazement... and wonder... and trust... and gratitude simply spill out.

And they aren’t necessarily grateful because... they’re just grateful. They have lived into an acceptance of what is... usually... at least on their best days.

In whatever the circumstance they are content.

They can rejoice “always” as Paul says.

They have awakened to what is eternal...

And when that happens, hosanna changes.

At Lectionary, one of our new friends (we call him Bob, the new guy) was with us and talked about seeing photos of the universe that the Hubble telescope took. He basically said, “there’s nothing left to say but Hosanna. And you don’t have to try or choose it... it’s just there... spilling over.”

I think maybe it’s a bit like a healthy and long marriage. When you first meet, it’s instant attraction... But, did you know that was mostly about you? What you needed consciously ad unconsciously?

It was about your needs

Likes and dislikes...

Your tastes and preference. You probably had a list. You needed someone steady... or warm... or secure... or fun... or who was Baptist (low romantic).

But... then the years pass. And anniversaries come and go... and holidays... and life... and partnership... appreciation... sacrifice.

And the 50th Anniversary rolls around and you can still make a list of what you love about him... about her.

Only, this list isn’t about you... It’s just about who your beloved is. Not for what they do for you... It’s just an awareness, a response to who they are.

Love and deep hosannas are the result of being with and being present... for so long.

The disciples understood... later after the glorification.

... hope that happens for us... As the years pass and holy days come and go.

Christmas... Palm Sunday... Good Friday... Easter after Easter after Easter.

I hope we come to know and love the Living Lord. And in that day... that we’re able to offer a true Hosanna.

Praise God...