

“Hosanna!” (Mark 11:1-10)

For Your Life in Christ the First Sunday in Advent

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Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church of Irvine, CA (LC-MS)

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Introduction: How God So Often Doesn’t Meet Our Expectations

- A. I once heard about someone who asked, “Why would you believe in God?” And then they went on to state the basis for their skepticism: “He has never been there for me. I prayed and prayed asking Him to help me, but nothing happened.”
- B. Clearly, there was a basic and popular assumption going on: “If God is real then He should answer my prayers according to my expectations.”
- C. This kind of idea reveals our consumerism mentality (getting what we want when we want it) and our self-centered concept of entitlement. I was amused by a picture in a newspaper of people in a long line outside a department store going into Black Friday. The caption stated “How people are willing to torture themselves.”
- D. Well, we do torture ourselves when we ignore God’s Word and assume to tell God “this is the way it should be; this is the way I want it, and this is what I expect!” But how far this is from what our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ prayed, ***“Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done (St. Luke 22:42).”***
- E. We too easily forget that we are not here for God to grant our Christmas “wish list,” our life “bucket list,” or whatever other list we come up with. We are not here for God to wait in expectation for us, but we are here to wait in expectation for God. This is why St. Paul says that the believer ***“walk[s] by faith, not by sight (2nd Corinthians 5:7).”***
- F. During the triumphal entry of our Lord into Jerusalem as

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recorded in this morning’s Gospel from St. Mark chapter 11, we have here what is probably another example of false expectations.

- G. The people cried out to the Lord, “Hosanna!” But we need to understand that there was a high-probability that at least many of the people who shouted out this holy call to God did it with some very interesting expectations.

Part I: “Hosanna” is an Important Word, but What Does It Mean?

- A. “Hosanna” appears in Psalm 118:25:

Psalm 118:25: *“Save us, we pray, O Lord! O Lord, we pray, give us success!”*

- B. Where the English says, “Save us!” that is the translation for *hoshi’ah na* or what we say as simply “hosanna.”
- C. But notice the context of this Psalm. At verses 10-11 the author of this Psalm writes, ***“All nations surrounded me; in the name of the Lord I cut them off! They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side; in the name of the Lord I cut them off!”***
- D. The context relates to war.
- E. In fact, the very concept of salvation in the Old Testament has this sense and is sometimes translated as “victory” because of military imagery. This was the idea which described God’s salvation for Israel when He defeated Pharaoh and his army during the exodus. (The Lutheran Study Bible, 843)
- F. O.K., so why bring any of this up? It was this militaristic or *political* sense that many of the people probably *meant* when they shouted “hosanna” to Jesus.
- G. They treated Jesus with false expectations. They wanted Him to be a military conqueror who would rescue the people from their Roman predicament.

- H. But I'm not explaining this for us to pick on the 1st century Jews. The point of course is that we do the same thing. We have our predicaments and many of them are unpleasant to say the least, but we assume that God's salvation in Christ is for fixing what **we** believe needs fixing.
- I. But remember dear Christians God says clearly in Isaiah 55:8: ***"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord."***

Part II: We Need To Use "Hosanna" the Right Way!

- A. The militaristic sense of the word is of course perfectly appropriate, but our enemy is not "flesh and blood (Eph 6:12)." There is most certainly a real battle, but it is a spiritual one.
- B. Our Old Testament reading from Isaiah 64 states the severity of this battle when it describes just how bad our sin is.

Isaiah 64:6a: *"We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment."*

- C. Our sin is described so severely that on account of our sin even the righteous things we do are like "polluted garments," a gross term referring to the cloth used when a woman was considered unclean in the Old Testament (Lev 15:19-33).
- D. That is to say, we have much larger problems than the worse earthly problems we can imagine. Our greatest need isn't more money, it isn't a better job, it isn't a better marriage, it isn't for us to be happier people, but our greatest need is to be saved from our sin which the devil would use to destroy us and keep us from saving faith.
- E. This is to say, Jesus rode into Jerusalem during that triumphal entry and He rides into your life today through

His Word and Sacrament to address your greatest and most serious needs.

- F. And remember dear Christian that the Lord, our Heavenly Father, knows best. He knows exactly what we need.
- G. I am not for a moment saying that God doesn't care about what you care about. But what I am saying that often He will permit us to go through all kinds of crazy paths just to get our attention long enough to address what is most important in our lives. And when we receive Christ the greatest gift we get all kinds of other gifts thrown in -- with Him -- like for example the peace of God which surpasses all understanding (Phil 4:7). So needless to say...

Conclusion: We Shout "Hosanna" because God has revealed to us what our Salvation is about:

- A. Jesus' life for you was to fulfill all righteousness. This is occasion for us to shout "hosanna!" The blessed one came to keep the Law for His people. He was victorious in its absolute fulfillment so that you who trust in Him are counted by God as holy, clean, and righteous. God is on your side now and all things will work for good (Rm 8:28).
- B. Jesus' death for you covered your sin with His blood. You start this new church year and your preparation for Christmas knowing that your sin is forgiven. In this light, "hosanna" is absolutely appropriate, because Christ won the victory over sin on the cross when He was made sin for you (2nd Co 5:21).
- C. "Hosanna" is also for Jesus' resurrection. He was victorious over your worst enemy, death. This is why you start this new church year with "Hosanna!" You live in the confidence that Christ shares His victory over death with you. The Blessed One Jesus has blessed you!

1st Corinthians 15:57: *"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*