

Hosanna!

First Congregational Church Branford
Luke 19:28-40; Psalm 118/April 14, 2019
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Jesus went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They said, "The Lord needs it." Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out." The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Psalm 118 is a song of victory. While it wasn't written about Jesus, note its prophetic nature... After the reading I'll play a 3 minute song:

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever! Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever." Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. *The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.* This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. *This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.* Save us, we beseech you, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech you, give us success! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord. The Lord is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will extol you. O

give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.
[Play *Hosanna!*]

That, of course, is from the Palm Sunday scene in Andrew Lloyd Webber's rock opera, *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Raise your hand if you've seen a stage or movie production, or heard the music.... I love listening to it this time of year.

Jesus's trip to Jerusalem was to be the final showdown with the religious leaders who wanted to be rid of Jesus. Jesus knew the people were looking for a king who would ride into Jerusalem on a big horse like a warrior, with swords and spears at his side to wipe out the dishonest leaders and save them from their corrupt ways.

But, Jesus wasn't to be that kind of a king. He told two of his disciples to go and get him a colt – in Luke, it's a colt, not a donkey. And, there are no palms in Luke's version of the event. Did you catch what the disciples did - they finally bid Jesus the honor he deserved – they threw their own cloaks on the colt, and put Jesus on top of them. Don't ya know, it had to have been a stunning sight to see the hope for the future ride in on a little colt! Bethany was one and a half miles from those *great gates*, so Jesus got to journey quite a ways as people spread their cloaks on the road before him.

On the path down to the entrance the disciples got the crowds going as they began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" Say it with me: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!.... Hosanna in the Highest Heaven!...

Palm Sunday is a mini break in the somberness of Lent. Today is a celebration. What a day it was! What a day it is! To honor our Lord. To recognize that he was, that he is, the Messiah!, and to pay him homage! Glory in the highest heaven!...

Everyone wanted to touch him, be seen by him, be smiled at by him. Smile at *me*, Jesus. Do you see *me*, Jesus? Let me touch you, Jesus. Well, everyone wanted to, except the Pharisees... In the song, we heard Caiaphas scowl at the crowd to be quiet, that if a riot ensued, Rome would come. But, come on now, that wasn't the only reason Caiaphas was annoyed, was it? He and some of the other Pharisees were jealous of the attention and praise Jesus was receiving; and they thought the crowd was misguided about Jesus' importance. But, no matter, Jesus knew the people needed this **joy**. They needed this joy - after all the heartache, after all the bad things that had happened. They needed this hope - it was an uprising of *hope!* Jesus had come to save them. This was huge! Jesus was like, *if every tongue was still, the noise would still continue. The rocks and stones*

themselves would start to sing! Hosanna!...

Hosanna means God. It was a rally cry for help – save us! They were saying, we beg you, save us, fight for us! Fight for *me*, fight for my church! Hosanna!

I adore this next verse in the song because it's what separated Jesus from all the other prophets who came raging into the city to rid it of its poisons – and then were stoned to death – Jesus says: “Sing me your songs, *but not for me alone*. Sing them for yourselves, for you are blessed.” He called them blessed. He's like, it's not just about me, it's about you, it's about the people. No one had said anything like that before. “There is not one of you who cannot win the kingdom, the slow, the suffering, the quick, the dead.” That's from the Beatitudes, of course, where he began his preaching, which set the tone of what he would be about - the slow, the suffering - blessed, blessed are you. *And, here he is now*, this humble Messiah – on a colt. It made no sense, but *humility* was going to rule the day. No more of puffing up your shoulders. The meek, the suffering were going to have a chance. Hosanna!...

Jesus loved them all so much. Even the Pharisees.

He loved them so much that as Jesus came near and saw the city, he wept over it. Because they couldn't recognize this visitation from God. They refused to see who he was. The leaders would refuse to change their unethical ways. So, Jesus wept.

Here's where we turn a little from Palm Sunday to Passion Sunday.

We know that Jesus entered the temple, drove out all of the merchants who were selling doves and other animals so folks could make their sacrifices - that wasn't the problem - the problem was the merchants, and the moneychangers were cheating and robbing the people blind. And, who do you think was benefiting from the extra money?? That's right. The Pharisees and Chief Priests. Jesus screams, “My house shall be a house of prayer! Get out!” He kept on, and kept on, while the chief priests, scribes, and leaders looked for a way to use this mad scene, this tirade as a reason to kill him. *How dare he come in here and do this*.

In today's scripture, Jesus was 33 years old. 33 years old. Some say his ministry lasted one year, others say it was 3... I tend to think it was one - they wouldn't have been able to put up with him for longer than that. Either way, Jesus wasn't able to save the people in the way they wanted to be saved. He lost. He lost that battle.

But, here's what he did, here's what he won. On the day that Jesus hung on the cross, he asked God to *forgive* those who had rejected, scorned, abused, and murdered him., to forgive those who wanted to get rid of him. And, our God

listened, and he took all of the evil, all of the sin, and forgave it. Done. A clean slate. Can you imagine? On the day Jesus rose to new life on the third day, the whole world went with him - the whole world rose too. The whole awful, violent world. A world that God so loves. *That's* what the Savior did.

And, that's why we're here today.

I have to tell you, I know that people do, but I don't romanticize the cross. It's a symbol of just how far human beings will go in treachery and heinousness. But, when you look away, and then look at it again, you can't help but recognize that God has the final word. Jesus didn't stay on that cross, did he? God is greater than any suffering you and I experience, any suffering you and I go through. I want you to know that wherever you are today. And, that resurrection is always God's response to suffering. Maybe not right away, but it's on its way. We're lucky we're going to get some next Sunday! Resurrection is always God's response. Amen?

Hosanna!....

Hosanna in the Highest!...

Amen.