Season: Lent

Series: Shelter From the Storm

Scripture: Psalm 118 and Matthew 21:12-17

Sermon: Hosanna

**Psalm 118**

**1**Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
    his love endures forever.

**2**Let Israel say:
    “His love endures forever.”
**3**Let the house of Aaron say:
    “His love endures forever.”
**4**Let those who fear the Lord say:
    “His love endures forever.”

**5**When hard pressed, I cried to the Lord;
    he brought me into a spacious place.
**6**The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid.
    What can mere mortals do to me?
**7**The Lord is with me; he is my helper.
    I look in triumph on my enemies.

**8**It is better to take refuge in the Lord
    than to trust in humans.
**9**It is better to take refuge in the Lord
    than to trust in princes.
**10**All the nations surrounded me,
    but in the name of the Lord I cut them down.
**11**They surrounded me on every side,
    but in the name of the Lord I cut them down.
**12**They swarmed around me like bees,
    but they were consumed as quickly as burning thorns;
    in the name of the Lord I cut them down.
**13**I was pushed back and about to fall,
    but the Lord helped me.
**14**The Lord is my strength and my defense[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%20118&version=NIV#fen-NIV-15884a)];
    he has become my salvation.

**15**Shouts of joy and victory
    resound in the tents of the righteous:
“The Lord’s right hand has done mighty things!
**16**    The Lord’s right hand is lifted high;
    the Lord’s right hand has done mighty things!”
**17**I will not die but live,
    and will proclaim what the Lord has done.
**18**The Lord has chastened me severely,
    but he has not given me over to death.
**19**Open for me the gates of the righteous;
    I will enter and give thanks to the Lord.
**20**This is the gate of the Lord
    through which the righteous may enter.
**21**I will give you thanks, for you answered me;
    you have become my salvation.

**22**The stone the builders rejected
    has become the cornerstone;
**23**the Lord has done this,
    and it is marvelous in our eyes.
**24**The Lord has done it this very day;
    let us rejoice today and be glad.

**25Lord, save us!
    Lord, grant us success!**

**26**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
    From the house of the Lord we bless you.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%20118&version=NIV#fen-NIV-15896b)]
**27**The Lord is God,
    and he has made his light shine on us.
With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession
    up[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%20118&version=NIV#fen-NIV-15897c)] to the horns of the altar.

**28**You are my God, and I will praise you;
    you are my God, and I will exalt you.

**29**Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
    his love endures forever.

**Matthew 21:1-11**

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, **2**saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. **3**If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

**4**This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

**5**“Say to Daughter Zion,
    ‘See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
    and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew%2021%3A1-11&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23832a)]

**6**The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. **7**They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. **8**A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. **9**The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

“Hosanna[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew%2021%3A1-11&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23836b)] to the Son of David!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew%2021%3A1-11&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23836c)]

“Hosanna[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew%2021%3A1-11&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23836d)] in the highest heaven!”

**10**When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?”

**11**The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

**Martin Luther and Psalm 118**

Martin Luther had been declared a heretic and public outlaw by the Catholic Church of the 16th century. For years he had been on the run continuing the movement that became known later as the protestant reformation. In 1530 when hiding in Coburg Castle Martin Luther wrote a commentary on Psalm 118. When reading Psalm 118 it is easy to see why a public outlaw on the run from his enemies might connect well with the psalm. It was later discovered that the room in which Luther was hiding Psalm 118:17 was written on the wall and became Luther’s motto.

“I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done.”

Psalm 118 wasn’t just the favourite psalm of Martin Luther, however. It also has big connections to the story we will examine today of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

**The Meaning of Words**

We read in Psalm 118:25 “Lord, save us! Lord, grant us success!” The phrase here “Lord, save us!” is the Hebrew wordhoshiya na. If this word seems somewhat familiar, you’d be right. This word is the word we now pronounce hosanna.

Now when the psalmist of Psalm 118 uses the word it is a cry for help. John Piper, now chancellor of Bethlehem College and Seminary, used the analogy of someone getting pushed off a diving board before you can swim to describe the use of the word in Psalm 118.

Imagine you can’t swim, and someone pushes you off the diving board into the deep end of the pool. When you hit the water, you would come up sputtering, “Somebody help me!” You are helpless and in need of saving.

So originally this word was a plea for help. Something you cried out when in trouble. Something as we mentioned Martin Luther would be very familiar with.

But then something happened to the meaning of the word, it changed.

This isn’t uncommon in language for words to change meaning, in fact, it happens in our English language all the time.

A word like text which originally referred to written or printed word. Now the word is more closely connected with a message that comes electronically over our phones.

And hanging around here on Wednesday evenings I hear words like slaps or cap. And neither mean what I thought they meant, it’s no longer someone hitting someone or something you wear on your head. Slaps now means something is great and cap means to lie or make a false statement.

And the word hoshiya-na changed from “save us” to mean “salvation has come.” No longer was it a plea but a praiseworthy note.

John Piper again uses the diving board analogy to describe this change.

  “It used to be what you would say when you fell off the diving board. But it came to be what you would say when you see the lifeguard coming to save you!”

A phrase that was once steeped in fear is a now a phrase that brings great hope.

**Triumphal Entry**

This leads us to the story of the triumphal entry in Matthew 21

Jesus comes into the city revealing who he is. He is the Christ. The long promised Messiah that was foretold by the prophets long ago. Verse 5 of Matthew 21 is quoted from Zechariah 9 the Old Testament prophet.

“Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”

This prophecy comes to fruition in Matthew 21 when Jesus does exactly as Zechariah had prophesied years earlier. The people shout hosanna. Salvation is here. The Messiah is here to break the chains of oppression that Israel is in under the Roman Empire. And yet in their call we hear the past meaning of hosanna as heard in Psalm 118- “Save us!”

They need saving. This Saviour however is not saving them from they think. He come to set them free, but not free from the Roman Empire. Jesus is no general. The whole triumphal entry of Jesus is a stark contrast from how a Roman of the day would view a triumphal entry. For the Romans parades would last for days. The war general would be paraded through the city on a horse usually white. The prisoners of war would also be paraded showing the people the prowess of the general.

Look to Jesus he doesn’t come on a great war horse. He doesn’t bring his prisoners. Instead, he rides on a donkey. This however does not mean he’s less of a king than the Roman counterpart. Riding on a donkey was in the middle eastern culture a royal act.

A donkey represented peace. We can see this a text like 1 Kings 1 where Solomon is going to become king of Israel and he rides in on a, you guessed it, a donkey. This represented peace to the people.

So here is Jesus. He comes in peace. Rome and people like Alexander founded their empires on bloodshed. However, Jesus was bringing a peaceable kingdom, one that would be founded through his own blood through a brutal death on the cross. And this kingdom Jesus was bringing too wasn’t worldly like Greece or Rome or even today’s big power players. No, this kingdom was universal it was above both time and space- it is eternal. Jesus would rise victorious from the grace and bring peace to hearts and minds of his followers. And it extends to today to bring peace to our minds and hearts. We know there is victory in Jesus he is alive and lives in our hearts!

**Misplaced Hosanna**

Now we like the people that day long ago see our salvation coming and we burst out “Hosanna!” But we can sometimes misplace our hosanna. What I mean by that is- Jesus didn’t come to save us exclusively from the schoolyard bully but to save us from ourselves and our sinful state. That can be hard to come to grips with. We’d like to play victim and think Jesus came to slay all the bad people- who are the real reason the world is a mess. But that’s not the case. Taylor Swift actually yet unintentionally I believe shared some theological truths when she said “It’s me, hi, I’m the problem, it’s me.” in her hit song Anti Hero. We need saving, and our sin is the problem. And that’s just what God did through Jesus. He saved us.

Listen to Heidelberg Catechism question and answer 60

*Q. How are you righteous before God?*

*A. Only by true faith in Jesus Christ.*

*Even though my conscience accuses me of having grievously sinned against all God’s commandments, of never having kept any of them, and still being inclined toward all evil, nevertheless, without any merit of my own, out of sheer grace, God grants and credits to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ, as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner, and as if I had been perfectly obedient as Christ was obedient for me.*

That’s freedom! We are no longer slaves to our sin as Paul puts it in Romans 6. We are no longer the problem. God has saved us in our sinful state. This truth echoes the words of Psalm 118 that was Martin Luther’s motto-

“I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done.”

We can too rework the words of Paul from Romans 5

While we were still sinners….. (while were still crying “save me”)….. Christ died for us!

God has made a way where there wasn’t one. We go before God perfectly clean. We go before him as if we had been perfectly obedient. This is true grace and perfect peace.

**A Call of Confidence**

All of this leads to us bursting forth with praise- hosanna in the highest! We can go with confidence that God has saved us through Jesus!

Many of you know I’m a huge Chicago Cubs fan. And in 2016 after 108 years the Cubs finally won the World Series. On the radio call that night was Cubs legendary broadcaster Pat Hughes. As the final out was made Hughes described the scene he saw on the field

“And the Chicago Cubs win the World Series! The Cubs coming pouring out of the dugout jumping up and down like a bunch of delirious 10-year-olds. The Cubs have done it!”

The joy that filled the Cubs players and fans after a 108 year wait to finally win the World Series is how we ought to feel as those saved by Jesus. We can jump around like a bunch of delirious 10-year-olds our palm branches held high and saying Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest!

And some people may ask like they asked me as one of those delirious Cubs fans why are you so happy? And we can respond like the psalmist-

“Come and see what God has done!” And then they too can join in the chorus of hosanna!

Sources

Hosanna! Palm Sunday, a message by John Piper, March 27 1983, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/hosanna>

Commentary on Psalm 118, Nancy Koester- Augsburg College, Minneapolis Minnesota, April 12 2009

Carson, D.A. “Matthew” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Volume 8* (Grand Rapids. Michigan: Zondervan, 1984)

Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 23 Question and Answer 60

Scripture:

Psalm 118, Matthew 21:1-11, Zechariah 9:9, Romans 6:22, Romans 5:8, Psalm 66:5, Psalm 46:8