

Hosanna. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel.

This is what the crowds cried out. Among them were those who had witnessed Lazarus coming out of the tomb at the simple words of Jesus, and those who had simply heard of such a thing happening. And I wouldn't be surprised if in the crowd also stood those who had been taught by Jesus, fed by Jesus, had demons exorcised by Jesus and healed by Jesus.

They had gathered together in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, a time of rejoicing in remembrance of when the living God had granted them life, free from the heavy yoke of Egyptian slavery, and into their midst, among such a festival, a man of great power and love has come. So they celebrate His goodness towards them. To Him they cry Hosanna. This is one they want to save them. But what are they asking him?

They want His care.

He has demonstrated all throughout His ministry His care for them and their needs, and in this day of celebration He comes and they cry out to Him as a king, though it is unlikely that they realize just how kingly He is today, just how much they are acting like His people. We are told, after all, that the disciples didn't piece it together until after the coming crucifixion. But all together they ask for His care.

These crowds, gathered and crying out, they want His service.

He's been one to give of His time and energy, certainly of His reputation. He has constantly given to all their needs and all of this was always without cost. His life has been one of service and they want that to continue throughout the festival of Passover and even well into the future.

Little do they know that this is precisely why He's here—long before they were waving palm branches and crying out Hosanna, He was planning on entering Jerusalem this weekend to give His service. And they don't yet understand the service He is willing to give, and has indeed be planning to give, all to *save them*.

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In His entry we see He demonstrates, He confesses, He embodies the nature of Godly service. He shows how it will enact itself in the great reversal in a few days, getting down and dirty for the sake of everyone around Him. Jesus' whole life had been one of selfless service, the Son of God from all eternity taking flesh to heal the blind, to forgive the adulterous, to chat with the outcasts. If anyone were the greatest, it would properly be Christ, and He truly is. But He demonstrates His greatestness by becoming least, by becoming the child who does as He's told by His Father, the server who waits on those around Him. And the triumphant entry just continues this theme—He is the King of Israel but He is here to bring peace, riding in on a donkey rather than a steed, and not beheading those who rightly ought to die for their treason. But instead He is there to answer their cry of Hosanna. Save us.

And this is how the disciples are to be—Jesus is quite explicit with them. They aren't to desire the places of honour but yet forsake them in order to serve. They are called to a give-up-your-seat, top-up-others'-glasses, see-if-the-dishes-need-to-be-done, ask-how-someone-is-doing-and-stop-and-listen! kind of ministry. yet they are caught up in the excitement, they are distracted by their sin, lead by their pride, and they want to know who's the greatest among them.

But the one who serves, the one who is working in the name of the LORD, must be a servant. Good for them, and good for us, that the one who has come in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel is here to serve completely, to die, and even for the disciples, who are maybe not yet ready to follow in paying such a cost. They, too, need saving.

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In the name of the Lord, the true, perfect king of Israel is here to save from greater fears, defeat stronger enemies, and deliver more magnanimous victories than the disciples could understand at the time, than the people, then and now, could even ask/hope for. They were looking for help for today's woes, freedom from today's political tyrants, joy in today's sadness. And He cared about their today-problems, ours too. Yet He's here to give so much more.

This has been His plan from the beginning, ever since mankind has fallen and destroyed the relationship with our creator. Before our hands could climb from this pit, before our minds could formulate a plan, before we could utter a cry for help, He sought to Hosanna us from this mess we find ourselves in. He heard the cry of our need, seeing our sorry state. And because He was complicit in such a cry for help even before it was conceived in their minds or ours, the king of Israel, YHWH Himself, the creator of the universe had mercy and set forth to save His people, to save all people, not by force and coercion, but by service and love. By His death and agony on the cross

So today even today, He hears us and invites us to cry *Hosanna. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel.*

Certainly in our everyday lives, we can cry to God when things are going bad—when we're in pain or when we can't help a friend or when answers to life seem shrouded. It's fantastic to call out to Him and He cares for every one of our needs and burdens, even the ones we forget to raise to Him. He listens and He responds as He knows right.

But today on the Lord's day, as every Sunday, in Communion we cry out a very special Hosanna and the Lord comes to us to serve us of His sacrifice and victory in a tangible way, one which He promises to do until the end of time, coming in a way we can feel with our hands, taste with our tongues, and hold onto with our faith. Just as He entered triumphantly into Jerusalem to serve His creation, He enters into this Church to serve us in His humble grace once again. Here and today, He meets us as we cry Hosanna and He is present as the server and the meal, the host all in one, continually giving to us Himself that we might be saved, that we would be hosannaed.

So today, at the table, come and have a foretaste of the feast to come, when we will be the greatest among all the greatest, enjoying paradise with all believers, surrounded by the glory of the Lord, worshipping Him forever. Today, we get a glimpse of the day when perfection will be eternally ours. One day.

But don't forget Christ's quick word to His disciples, who like us are so fast to forget the nature of the salvation, the Character of our saviour, the flavour of our lives until that great day.

We are called to service, upside down, poured out service, just as we've received.

From what we've been given, from whom we've been met by, in Whom we live, we are transformed into His character so we serve at the cost of our own lives, whether that be our time, our money, or patience, our energy, or literally our lives.

To despise this, to laugh at this, or to ignore this is to despise what we've received or at least to misunderstand it. If we think that we have been served just to lie back and ignore the needs of those around us, we may have received from Christ but we are not connected to Him, living in Him. As Christians, we must serve.

Yet to feel guilty into service is to misunderstand it as well—we don't serve in order to keep our place at the table in the kingdom, we don't serve in order to maintain our place among the saved. If this were the case, if this is what Christ expected of us, we'd have no hope. Instead we serve because we are already being served.

So receive. Be served. He came to serve the unrighteous, to eat among the sinners, all that they would finally understand. In the last supper that is precisely what He did, as the disciples were still stuck in their misunderstanding and their pride, and today Jesus eats among sinners as well. He doesn't despise this fact but instead He lavishes it; He has the privilege of eating among sinners that they might receive His service from Him, and out of that the disciples served, and we too will serve.

All throughout our lives, He loves to serve us, no matter what our today looks like. Daily we may cry *Hosanna. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel* for there is no end to His love. Not even death could stop His serving love. In fact, His death, and His resurrection sealed for us His loving care, His great service, for all our days, even into eternity.

Amen.