

They praised the One who could raise the dead. Days earlier Lazarus was in the tomb until his friend Jesus appeared and had them open the tomb that He may speak a resurrecting Word, a command that reversed death, and now they are throwing their cloaks on the ground and waving palm branches in the air. They want this man with power over death to be in their midst, to lead them and care for them.

And who wouldn't?

For those who had been following, and for all the gossip I'm certain circulating among the people, Jesus was the guy who made wine out of water, who turned a little bread and fish into an all-the-crowd-can-eat buffet, who healed lepers and if the rumors are true, has power over even the weather. And now He can reverse what even He didn't catch before it was too late—He didn't heal His friend when he was still alive but the end of death doesn't even hinder this guy. Crown Him king already! Hosanna! Save us!

It's easy to follow the king who does grand things, to get behind the politician that stops the evil that we fear or hands out handouts when times are getting a little tight. We can trust someone who has proven their worth with their wise arguments, with their great strength, or with their far-reaching influence.

So it makes sense that the people flock to Jesus as He enters Jerusalem, glorious after His victory over Lazarus' death, shining after years of miracles. It also makes sense why people begin to distance themselves when, in just a few days, His power fades as He becomes a target and a victim. They don't stand behind Him when He who could save others doesn't fight to defend Himself. If He allows Himself to be bound and mocked and tried, maybe they had it wrong; maybe all the good stuff He did was simply a coincidence—He was at the right place at the right time and simply took credit. He's clearly not who we had hoped in though.

But our readings today, and all of Scripture, really, come together to point out the truth that the lower Christ descends among our race, the worse things seem to get for Jesus, the less hope that we could have for our Lord, the more we ought to cry out Hosanna in hope and mean it.

It began 33ish years earlier, or about 4 months according to our Church calendar, when the God of the universe, the second person of the Trinity, the only begotten Son of God chose to take on human flesh and dwell among His creation. But He didn't simply take on flesh that can grow and ache and bleed and a soul that can rejoice and ache and grieve, but He did this in the midst of shame and poverty rather than in a kingly palace like He deserves and we might expect. And then this lowly one grew and learned and needed the care of His mortal parents and brothers and sisters and friends; the God of all creation was dependent. Then even as He demonstrated His wonderful wisdom and works, as He displayed the fact that He was man but like no other man, as He resisted temptation and the lure of the devil and the false teachings of the Pharisees and the church of His day, followers came and went—only a few stuck around. Though He rightly deserved the masses to follow Him and trust Him, the sin of the people, the distractions of the world, and determination of the devil, and even the mysterious will of God ensured that only a handful stuck around through it all. And even of them, most run away in fear and shame. Before He takes His last breath, gives up His Spirit, and dies.

The people cease crying Hosanna, save us, when it becomes evident that He can't or won't, at least not in the ways they want Him to, but that doesn't mean they shouldn't cry out for saving.

Our reading from Isaiah makes it clear that in His obedience, in His faithful listening to God the Father, He will suffer. He will be struck, His beard pulled, and the malice of His enemies' words will sink deep, and yet He will be resolute, unswerving from His goal. His face is set like a flint in faithfulness, undoubting that His God is faithful even as enemies surround Him.

Jesus walks into Jerusalem surrounded by the peoples' praise, hearing their incomprehending cries for help and salvation, and He is fully aware that He is walking into His own trial and execution, but

even as He rides on the donkey to His own death, He is not dissuaded, wanting to turn around and find an easier way; He does not doubt God's plan nor God's help, but He is confident, saying as from Isaiah "But the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced...behold the Lord God helps me; who will declare me guilty?"

His coronation in just a few days would be with a crown of thorns; His throne would be the cross upon which He would hang in agony until His last breath, and yet He is rightfully the Hosanna-ing-King, the saving-us-King, because He is perfectly willing to take up this battle in weakness, to lose it, to bear our guilt and shame and become our sin, to become nothing in the eyes of God, and yet to do it all with unending, unwavering faith.

And in doing so, to save us.

When it appears that the One we hope in has failed, when we aren't getting the help that we've prayed for; when what He has won and promised don't seem to be present in our lives or even on their way, but in fact life seems to be full of the opposite, this is not a reason to doubt or lose hope, for this is precisely how our Lord works, how our King reigns.

He makes everything out of nothing; He creates life out of death. He is our Redeemer, and thus needs something to redeem, to recreate, to renew, to reinvigorate.

He is the One who knew His purpose was to not simply sustain like a singular grain of wheat but gave up all strength and life and respectability and died. All so that in His death, a harvest of life would be gathered and shared.

Likewise, as we await for all we hope for, as we anticipate the restoration that He has won, we gain so much more than simply the answer to our prayers. Health is nice; food is great; love and relationships are a gift from God; work is important; answers to the tough questions and big decisions are wonderful. These are all blessings which we ought to pray for and hope that He delivers, that He answers, but better than all of them is the belief that is taught, the hope that grows, the faith that is

shaped and formed in the midst of waiting for all His blessings, waiting for our King to care for us as we know He will.

So cry out Hosanna to your king. Cry save us when it is clear that He has the power to deliver you. Cry save me when it seems like He has forgotten you or seems to be working counterintuitively to what you might think you need. In all moments, no matter how things appear, He is the King who has already brought you salvation out of nothing. He is the One who has proven that nothing can stop Him. He is the faithful One in whom you can trust. So in all moments, in every need, cry out Hosanna, save me, save us. And because He already has, He most certainly will save you.

Amen