**April 10, 2022 Matthew 21:1-11**

***Hosanna***

**Scripture: *Matthew 21:1-11 NRSV***

*(1)When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, (2)saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. (3)If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." (4)This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, (5)"Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey." (6)The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; (7)they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. (8)A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. (9)The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" (10)When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" (11)The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."*

**Notes:**

1. Jesus is an ***unusual*** King.
   1. Jesus’s triumphal entry was ***different***.
   2. Jesus’ entire life was dedicated to a ***different*** ***way***.
2. Jesus is a ***Holistic*** ***Liberator***.
   1. Jesus freed people ***physically***.
   2. Jesus freed people in ***social*** ways.
   3. Jesus freed people from ***spiritual*** destruction.
3. Jesus is the People’s ***Savior***.
   1. The way to be freed is through ***love*** and ***humility***.
   2. Jesus longed to give them the ***kingdom*** of ***heaven***.
4. We often miss the ***kingdom*** of ***God***.
   1. We get bogged down in ***despair*** and stop looking.
   2. We ignore our own deep need for ***liberation***.
   3. Jesus longs for our ***true*** and ***complete*** liberation.
   4. Jesus came to ***save*** us.
5. We cry out from the most ***broken*** places of our lives.
   1. God ***answered*** those cries when coming to earth.
   2. Know that Jesus ***hears*** our “Hosanna” cries, that God is indeed ***with*** us, and that God will indeed ***answer*** us.
   3. The kingdom of God is ***present*** here.
   4. ***Surrender*** fully to the saving power of Jesus; stop trying to find salvation in anything but ***Christ*** alone.

**Script:**

Everybody loves fanfare and a parade, the celebrations of this life seem to stay in my mind for so long. Last week as I enjoyed the Mission Advance services, I was reminded of the ordination service 8 years ago, the evening I received my Ordination Credentials. I remember the fanfare, the march into the sanctuary; sitting in the front row waiting for the moment when they would call my name, I would walk the platform, and the General Superintendent would pronounce me an ordained elder

We all have these celebrated moments, moments when all eyes seem to be on us. In many ways they are rights of passage, much like getting your driver’s license, graduating from High School or college, getting married, or having a child.

Palm Sunday often feels like a long-awaited day of celebration in the season of Lent, and we haven’t reached Easter yet, but getting to wave palm branches and shout “Hosanna!” still feels like a reprieve from the somber tones of fasting and repentance that have consumed the rest of the season. Yet we forget while we shout “hosanna” that the word is actually a cry of desperation. The word means, “Lord, please save us!” It is a plea for rescue. Stand with me and join me in the reading of a portion of God’s love story to us; Matthew 21:1-11

*(1)When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, (2)saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. (3)If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." (4)This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, (5)"Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey." (6)The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; (7)they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. (8)A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. (9)The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" (10)When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" (11)The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."* ***Matthew 21:1-11 NRSV***

The crowds that day weren’t singing songs of joy and worship in the ways that we typically think; the people were singing songs of liberation. They were an oppressed people who needed a savior and not in a metaphorical sense, but in a very real sense, they were suffering, and they longed to be saved. Some ridicule the crowd from that day as though they miss the point of Jesus’s coming. We treat their expectation for a political revolutionary, a revolution to come in and overthrow the current government as ludicrous. Yet wouldn’t anyone in their circumstances long for the same? And that is the truth, even though Jesus came in unexpected ways (peaceful instead of violent, humble instead of flashy), he *did* come to liberate them. Jesus liberation was going to look very different from what they thought, but it was never meant to be about a spirituality that was separated from the physical suffering of the oppressed; it was meant to encompass all of it.

If we aren’t careful, we can gloss over all of that reality, especially when we try to rush to the praise and celebration of Palm Sunday. If we aren’t careful, we can gloss over our own realities, our own suffering and pain, our own need for a Savior, in the entirety of our spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical lives. We can gloss over the deep-hearted cries of “Hosanna!” a humble, desperate cry for a Savior that we very much still need to be crying out for in our world today.

I don’t know if you have ever heard this before but, Jesus is an unusual King. There was a pattern and tradition to triumphal entries in Rome. The Roman triumphal entry was the highest honor granted to emperors and generals. It was a procession into the city of Rome, led by government officials, sacrificial animals followed for the temples of the Roman gods, then the champion in a chariot, usually wearing purple regalia, followed by the champion’s captives of war. This processional was given to honor those who were victorious in war. It included festivals, dancing, singing, and flower petals strewn upon the ground. The path for the processional was often intentionally cleaned and prepared in advance to usher in the triumphant victor of war.

Jesus’s triumphal entry was different. He didn’t proceed into the city of Rome, the heart of the empire; instead, he entered Jerusalem, the location of the temple and the heart of the Jewish faith. He also was not entering as a victor of war or battle. Instead, he marched toward his own death, which was a victorious act of a different kind. Jesus’s triumphal entry is an example of the upside-down nature of the kingdom of God, where victory comes through humility rather than the violent means of conquering a foe. Finally, instead of a horse and chariot, Jesus rode in on a donkey, another illustration of humility. Donkeys were pack animals, not war animals, and they were also a symbol of peace, as opposed to horses, which symbolized war and victory.

Jesus’s departure from the norm wasn’t just in his triumphal entry; it was in the way he was born and lived his life. The triumphal entry obviously illustrates the ways that Jesus is using Roman symbols in a different way, but his entire life was dedicated to a different way. He was born in a stable, not a palace, He was welcomed by shepherds rather than nobility. His ministry baffled Jewish leaders as he healed on the Sabbath, ministered to gentiles, humanized women, and pushed back against other religious norms that marked him as

Let us view Jesus as the Holistic Liberator. Jesus freed people physically. He performed miracles of healing that restored sight, mobility, health, and even raised the dead back to life. He also performed miracles that met basic needs, like hunger and thirst. He fed the multitudes, He turned water into wine, and let us not forget the miraculous catch of fish. Jesus’s resurrection is the ultimate testament to God’s liberation of the physical body in Jesus’s resurrection we get a glimpse of the type of bodily resurrection that awaits us all.

Jesus freed people in social ways too. He freed people from bondage to destructive systems, calling people to live according to a different economy. He called tax collectors to stop cheating people; he called the wealthy to lives of scandalous generosity; he called laborers to rest from their toils; he pronounced blessings upon the poor; and he overturned tables in the temple to illustrate his intolerance of injustice and exploitation. Jesus called people out of legalism, breaking religious rules by being willing to physically touch and talk to women who weren’t part of his immediate family; by healing on the Sabbath; and by touching the diseased, who were considered unclean. Jesus called people out of their own systems of prejudice by recasting a hated ethnic group (Samaritans) as heroic and/or worthy of his personal attention; by honoring and prioritizing women; and by socializing with outcasts and sinners.

Jesus freed people from spiritual destruction. He exorcised demons, pointed people toward God, called his followers to righteousness, and urged the people to repent of their sins. In every way imaginable, Jesus sought to save people from sin, destruction, and brokenness.

Jesus is the People’s Savior. The road that led through Jerusalem was the same road that led to the cross. The work of Christ had already begun. He had already begun saving people, but the work came to a point of atonement through the cross. The death of Christ is the ultimate act of liberation from sin, the work continues in the resurrection as the liberation from death, and it will come to completion when Christ finally returns to make all things right.

The Savior was present in the people’s midst in Jerusalem, they just didn’t understand that the way to be freed wasn’t through power and control but through love and humility. They longed to claim the kingdom of the world, but Jesus longed to give them the kingdom of heaven. We are reminded here that Jesus taught his disciples to pray that the kingdom of God would come on earth as it is in heaven that the true liberation would be not an escape of souls to heaven but the joining of the earth *with* heaven in restored fullness.

Despite their lack of understanding, the cries of “Hosanna!” were being answered in the very midst of those shouting it. The already/not-yet kingdom of God was firmly established around them through the presence of Christ, the Messiah.

We often miss the kingdom of God in our midst today in much the same way the crowd did that day in Jerusalem. We look for a political hero, or we look for fulfillment in idols of our own making. We get bogged down in despair when the problems of the world feel too big for us, so we stop looking for solutions. We stop up our ears to the cries for liberation around us when the task feels insurmountable. We ignore our own deep need for liberation because surrender to transformation is uncomfortable. We fear what we are being called to. We struggle with what it means to be vulnerable. We allow shame to narrate our lives.

Jesus longs for our true and complete liberation; physical, mental, emotional, spiritual. He longs to liberate us from our systems of sin and social oppression, racism, sexism, greed, our lust for power and control. He longs to liberate oppressors *and* oppressed from our systems of sin.

Jesus came to save us, Jesus came to respond to the deepest cries of “Hosanna!” We must be open and surrender ourselves to that work by reflecting on the ways we’ve fallen short, repenting and turning toward Christ and away from sin, surrendering to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and joining the work and mission of God in the world to share the good news.

Hosanna—Lord, please save us! We cry out from the deepest and most broken places of our lives. When we stop and take the time to listen, we can hear that cry all around us as well. We can see the consequences of sin and brokenness in so many places, and We can feel the deep need for a Savior. We cry out, and others cry out, yet we know that while we cry God is already answering our cries.

God already answered those cries when coming to earth to take on humanity. He came to show us another way. He came to reveal to us a better way to live. He came to heal, to restore, to say the hard words that needed to be said words that would free us from bondage. We know that Jesus hears our “Hosanna” cries, we must know that God is indeed with us. We must know that God will indeed answers us.

The journey that day in Jerusalem was a parade to the cross, not a throne yet, the greatest kingdom of all was being declared. The kingdom of God is present here, and we are invited to participate in it now, but still we pray that that kingdom would come in its fullness. We pray that the Savior would come again to make all things right, and we trust that he will. We are still in Lent. We declare our humanity and our need for a Savior. Where do you need a Savior today? Where is Jesus seeking to free you? What systems is Jesus seeking to tear down? Where are you being called to join in the work of the kingdom of God? Whose cries for salvation are you being urged to listen to more deeply?

May we surrender fully to the saving power of Jesus. May we confidently cry out, “Lord, please save us!” with the knowledge that our cries are already heard. May we stop trying to find our salvation in anything but Christ alone, that we may truly see the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.