



Passionate Trust
Matthew 21:1-12

Palm Sunday April 13, 2014

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When preachers approach this day, normally called Palm Sunday, there is the difficult decision of how to handle it. Does the focus remain on the joy of the day, thus sticking with the name Palm Sunday? Or, does the preacher head deeper into Holy Week and focus on the suffering of Jesus, thus giving the name to this day as Passion Sunday? Do we think about the parade, or do we head toward the cross? Do we talk about the glory of the palms or the gloom of the passion?

Or, does the preacher head into the direction of paradox and do both? We all know that life can be both glory and tragedy at the same time. How often do I do a memorial service and within the family at the same time of the death there is a birth of a child.

Our worship service today is the paradox. We started with joy, focusing on glorifying and praising Jesus, just as that crowd did so long ago. The first 11 verses of our scripture passage describe that parade, all that led up to it...and the joy of the people as Jesus enters into Jerusalem.

But did you notice the shift in our scripture passage? It was almost as if it didn't belong. There is a change in tone, the hint that something was going to go wrong. It's like in a movie where the music suddenly changes to something ominous, and you know something bad is going to happen. It's in the verse that reads, "Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there." It's the story of the cleansing of the temple.

This upsets the religious leaders, and they begin to look for a way to kill Jesus. So, in the glory of a parade, the reading of Matthew begins its walk to the cross. The parade heads towards passion narrative. And thus, our service now switches gears as we begin our walk with Jesus to the cross. Our service started with the Palms and it will end with our focus on the cross. The music, the tone of the worship service, will be more subdued now as we enter into Holy Week.

And my sermon will be a paradox. There will be much joy in my message, but with the undercurrents of the walk to the cross.

I want you to think about the word “passion” for a moment. We usually associate it with something like a romance novel or overheated desire. Yet, it can also mean something that we so love and are committed to that we are willing to sacrifice for its achievement. In the NT, the word “passion” is closely associated with suffering. That is why we call the suffering of Jesus “The Passion of Christ”. It not only involves Jesus’ suffering, but his commitment to do the will of God no matter what.

Through it all, Jesus had to trust his Father. Thus, the name of this message: *Passionate Trust*, with the emphasis on the word “passion.” There may be suffering involved when you trust

Jesus entered Jerusalem with remarkable trust – the willingness to endure suffering; the willingness to act in faith and trust in God’s purposes – come what may. Think about what Jesus endured during Passion week and still had to trust:

The betrayal of a friend (Judas) for money. Passionate trust.

In the Garden, Jesus asks Peter, James and John to accompany him, to stay awake and watch while he prays. They fall asleep not once, not twice, but three times. Passionate trust.

When Jesus prays in the Garden, he asks God to take away this “cup.” Is there another way? God says no. Passionate trust.

The disciples flee when Jesus is arrested. Passionate trust.

Peter denies knowing Jesus not once, not twice, but three times. Passionate trust.

Through all of this, Jesus had to consider that God knew what he was doing. He kept walking forward in passionate trust. To stay committed no matter what.

Did you notice? The disciples had to trust Jesus, too. Jesus tells two unnamed disciples to go to a certain village, find a certain donkey with her colt, untie them, and bring them to Jesus. One man put it this way:

“I am fairly confident that they had imagined for themselves a grander and nobler role on this day than being on donkey detail...[yet] on this very public and glorious day of Jesus' ministry, a day when he will be welcomed into Jerusalem with joyous hosannas, they find themselves engaged in a most unromantic form of ministry, mucking around a stable, looking suspiciously like horse thieves, and trying to wrestle an untamed and no doubt balky animal toward the olive groves. For this they left their fishing nets?”

(Thomas Long, *Christian Century*, April 4, 2006, p 18)

Passionate Trust. But, did you notice that the disciples' trust and obedience resulted in glory to God. Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Riding on a donkey!

Do you know what hosanna means?

Here is a little word study: The NT was originally written in Greek; the OT in Hebrew. When the word Hosanna appears in the NT, do you know what the Greek word is? It is "Hosanna." The English translators took the Greek word Hosanna and just gave it English letters.

Now, if you go to a Greek dictionary and look up the word Hosanna, you will discover it is not a Greek word at all. The original writers of the Greek NT took a Hebrew word, and did the same thing that the English translators did. They gave Greek letters to a Hebrew phrase.

So what I am trying to say is this: Our English word "hosanna" comes from a Greek word "hosanna" which comes from a Hebrew phrase "hoshiya na."

This Hebrew phrase is found in only one place in the OT. It is from Psalm 118: 25 and it says, "Save us, we beseech you." Or "save us, please"! It is a cry to God for help. It would be like someone throwing you in the deep end of a swimming pool when you don't know how to swim. Save me! Hoshiya na!

Over the years, the meaning of hoshiya na began to change. In Psalm 118, hoshiya na ("Save us, we beseech you!") is immediately followed by "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" (verse 26). This is the immediate answer to the cry for help. Eventually, this cry for help (save us!) stopped being a cry for help, and instead became a shout of hope and exultation.

It used to mean "save, please!" But gradually it came to mean, "Salvation! Salvation has come!"

Let's go back to the swimming example. The original meaning of hoshiya na is what you used to say when you were pushed into the deep end of the pool. Save, please! But the new meaning of hoshiya na is now what you say when you see the lifeguard coming to save you: Salvation! Salvation has come!

So "Hosanna!" means, "Hooray for salvation! It's coming! It's here! Salvation! Salvation!" Your heart is overflowing with hope and joy because salvation is on the way and you can't keep it in. Hosanna! Salvation has come!

Ok, let's try another example for those of you not into word studies. Let's try sports. Baseball season is starting. Let's pretend your favorite team makes it to the World Series this year (and if you don't have a favorite team, just pretend; go with me here); it's game 7, bottom of ninth. Your team is behind 4-3. Two out, one on second base.

The slugger of your team steps up to the plate. Half the crowd pleads: "Hit a home run." This is the old Hosanna: save us, please!. The other half of the crowd says, "He's going to do it. I know he will." This is the new hosanna: Salvation has come! He is going to hit a home run!.

We are to claim the new hosanna in our trust.

A Sunday school teacher decided to have her young class memorize one of the most quoted passages in the Bible – Psalm 23. She gave them a month to learn the verses. One boy was excited and enthusiastic, but after his best efforts he simply couldn't get the words to stay in his head. On Sunday, the children were invited to recite the psalm in worship. One child after another successfully said the lovely prayer. The forgetful boy rose nervously, stepped to the microphone, and said loudly, "The Lord is my Shepherd...And that's all I know."

The Lord is my Shepherd; sometimes that is all we really need to know.

Hosanna! Salvation has come. We can walk forward in trust believing, as Jesus did, that God will work it out.

None of this comes easy to us, this passionate trust, to trust no matter what. Trusting is a learning curve. In fact, embedded in this story is a picture of what the struggle is like. It's not found in the crowds who praise him, but in the animal that carries Jesus. The Gospel of Mark tells us that it was a colt that had never been ridden. An unbroken animal is terrible to ride; it wants to reject the rider and be free. Yet, because of whom Jesus was, this immature and untamed animal submitted to him and exalted him for his journey.

That's us. We're untamed and immature and prone to reject our rider. Yet we have been chosen to submit ourselves to Jesus, to trust, come what may, so that Jesus will be exalted along the way.

So, how do we exhibit passionate trust? How can we express the new hosanna: "salvation has come"?

It looks like this: I am going to make some statements of trust. At the end of the statement, I will say: "Hosanna in the highest." When you hear those words, you will declare together the new hosanna: **Salvation has come!**

Let's begin that way: "Hosanna in the highest!" **Salvation has come!**

Our emotions might suggest that God has deserted us but God has told us that He will never leave us or forsake us. We can trust these words. Hosanna in the highest! **Salvation has come!**

We may feel that we are facing a situation that we cannot handle, but the Bible tells us that we can "do all things through Christ who will give us strength". We can trust these words. Hosanna in the highest! **Salvation has come!**

We may feel that we are not "good enough" but the Bible tells us that we are "saved by grace and not by works". Hosanna in the highest! **Salvation has come!**

Our lives may be blown and tossed by the seas of circumstances, but God's Word is an anchor that holds solid. We can trust these words. Hosanna in the highest! **Salvation has come!**

When we feel unloved, scripture says that nothing can separate us from the love of God. We can trust God's words. Hosanna in the highest! **Salvation has come!**

When we trust, our lives will bring honor and glory to God. Just as the colt allowed Jesus to ride on him. As the disciples trusted in Jesus. As did Jesus' life as he walked towards the cross. Hosanna in the highest! **Salvation has come!**

I invite you to walk with Jesus to the Cross this week as he trusted: Come to the service on Thursday as we remember Jesus' last meal and arrest. Come on Friday as we remember the crucifixion. Come on Saturday as we learn how to live between Good Friday and Easter.

And when you do, you will fully understand Easter, the new hosanna: salvation has truly come.

Amen.

(I am indebted to John Piper for his take on hosanna in his sermon "Hosanna" preached at Bethlehem Baptist, March 27, 1983).

