

March 29, 2026 - Matthew 21:1-11 - "Hosanna"

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[0:00] Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew 21, 1-11. Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, they came to Beth's page, to the Mount of Olives.

Then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her.

Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says to you, you shall say, The Lord needs them. He will send them at once.

This took place to fulfill what has been spoken by the prophet, saying, Say to the daughter of Zion, Behold, your king is coming to you.

Humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the full of a piece of burden. The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them.

[1:07] They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks. And he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others caught branches from trees and spread them out on the road.

And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, Who is this?

And the crowd said, This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee. This is God's word. Thanks be to God. All right.

The kids have taken over the service. Is that all right? Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, we're taking an intentional moment to pause during this Holy Week.

And Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday, the entering of Jesus into Jerusalem, as we read in the passage, to Good Friday and then to Easter Sunday.

[2:16] And it's difficult sometimes playing through this because we know how the story ends. And so it kind of takes a little bit of like holy restraint to appreciate things that are happening here before the cross, before the resurrection.

And maybe that's a new story for you today. And that's good news for you. And so everyone is invited to hear this and to be changed and transformed by this Easter message.

So we're pausing the 2 Samuel series. We'll pick up after Easter. But did you hear what was just read? Have you heard this over and over again?

You know, Easter after Easter, this big moment of Hosanna. Hosanna in the highest. What a moment that would have been.

Right? What a moment. I mean, imagine being there that day. And you see the crowds building.

[3:30] You hear this excitement and the noise rising from people. And you watch as people are throwing cloaks down on the road.

They're laying branches. All in front of this man riding on a donkey into the city.

And there's something called groupthink. You know, I'm sure not everyone knew what was going on in this day, but it was pretty fun to participate in.

Right? They're shouting some people with intentional words and some people just kind of joining the crowd. Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Do you sense the intensity of this moment? Feels like everything is finally happening. For those who don't know what's happening, they're like, something's happening.

[4:31] Surely there is. And even us. We'd probably join in too. Whether we knew who he was or not.

Right? We'd probably join in with the crowds. We'd shout it as well. Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. But here's the question.

What if you were completely right about who he is? What if you're completely right about the plea, the cry of Hosanna, but completely wrong of what that looks like as it unfolds?

Or completely wrong of what he actually came to do? What if you could say the right words and feel the excitement? And all this is right. It's right excitement.

And you're standing in the right crowd. Everything is right. But you still miss him. I think we've dolled down the sharp mission of Jesus Christ to, at times, feel sort of particularly related to our situations and our needs and our requests.

[5:50] And this is something that happens in Matthew 21 before our eyes. And Matthew makes some great commentary in here to make us understand that clearly.

This is exactly what happens in Matthew 21. And if we're honest, it's still happening today. As we're shouting the right calls, we're shouting the right praises, but we're missing the mission of God in our lives.

What we have for this Palm Sunday is a simple sermon title titled Hosanna. And I have no control over the slides today.

Good luck. And I'm going to break this down into three sections. But it's going to feel more like a survey over what was actually going on beneath the surface of this passage.

So the first section will kind of land in this passage in Matthew 21. And then in the second section, I want to take some time to actually look deeper into this word Hosanna as it relates to the Old Testament of what the meaning was and how it was misconstrued.

[7:08] And by the end of our time, I believe that we will see ways that we in our lives can be challenged of making this rightful, contextual, sound cry to God to save us without missing Jesus.

We can shout the right word and actually mean it. And so this sermon title is Hosanna. And the point that I will be arguing today is that a true cry to God is not about removing discomfort, but removing sin.

Let's pray as we get into this passage and look upon this magnificent moment in history unfold.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for gathering us here.

We thank you for the children that even the two older children who read the passage today were once younger on this stage singing and all of that.

And you're raising up the next generation of leaders. And we are a church who embraces that, cultivates that, and gives opportunities for younger people to lead.

[8:28] Thank you, Lord, for what you do in this church and what you are going to do through your word in our lives today. And just as we finish reading the passage today, this is God's word and we give thanks to you because we need you to speak into our lives today.

And we pray that you do that through the power of your Holy Spirit and the inspired, inerrant, and perfect word of your Bible. And we praise in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Amen. The first section I want us to see is the Hosanna that they shouted. I want us to look at this and kind of just till around the soil a little bit here in this passage in Matthew.

And just as it was read, thank you guys for reading that, ladies. As Jesus approached Jerusalem, he came to Bethphage.

And that's in verse 1. And then this situation unfolds into verse 2 and 3 as he sends his disciples ahead of him with a specific instruction, a specific itinerary of what they are to do.

[9:45] And look at that instruction. He says to them, Go into the village in front of you and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her.

Untie them and bring them to me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, The Lord needs them and he will send them at once.

Look at the preciseness of this account. He doesn't say, If you go into the village, you know, kind of search out a donkey.

Look over here. Look over there. There's a lot of precise language in this passage. Jesus says, Immediately you will find this. And then if anyone were to ask you, which they're probably going to,

say this.

I want you to see the precision of this account. The precision of this account. There is nothing accidental here.

[10:49] There is nothing accidental. What may be perceived as sort of just the unfolding of history and maybe a good guess, right?

There's actually orchestrated history unfolding within history. This is magnificent. You should see it. He knows where the colt is.

He knows how the owners are going to respond. And what is about to happen. What we see here very quickly in this triumphal entry into Jerusalem is the setting and the foundation of something certain.

This is about authority. Authority of Christ. It's about how Christ guides history. It's about how he's orchestrating all things according to his sovereign will.

It's about divine omniscience. It's on full display here in the passage. And in verse 5, Matthew's like, okay, I want to make sure Steel Valley Church in the year 2026 doesn't miss the point.

[12:00] And so Matthew adds a little bit of commentary here in verse 5. He says, this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet.

This is why it's taking place. Matthew's like, where the prophet said, behold, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey.

Matthew's saying, don't miss this point. Jesus is orchestrating a time in real history where the world can look upon the promise of old and point forward without a doubt that this is the king.

This is the king that Zechariah prophesied about. This is the fulfillment of this. Jesus is not subtly fulfilling it, somehow kind of like getting a couple things right.

But he is making an undeniable claim here. It's absolutely unmistakable. And so in verse 6 and 7, the disciples bring the donkey, they bring the colt, they lay their cloaks on it, and Jesus sits on the donkey.

[13:14] And as he rides into the city, the crowd responds in a way that is so loaded with meaning. And you have to realize, what's the foundation?

It's God's will. God is orchestrating history, as Matthew is helping us understand. And now, the crowds are also pointing to something loaded with meaning.

I want you to imagine this. In verse 8, here comes Jesus. I mean, you've seen a donkey, right? I mean, come on, Canfield Fair?

This is a known thing. Do they have donkeys at the fair? Yeah, they probably do. I've never seen one. But, I've never seen one at the fair, but, I mean, could you imagine anyone, imagine Leroy riding in on a donkey.

His legs, he'd be having to pick up his legs. And he's just, you know, I mean, imagine this scene of what's taking place.

[14:31] It's almost humorous. They begin spreading, putting their cloaks on the road. This is an ancient way of paying homage to kings.

Others are cutting branches from trees, like the kids came in waving. It's not just excitement. It's not just excitement, though.

What they're doing is they're recognizing something. They're connecting the foundation, the foundation of what God is orchestrating in real history. And they're recognizing that. And they're recognizing that.

They're reinforcing that. And verse 9, they begin to shout, Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest. It's an interesting word, isn't it? You can tell everyone you know Hebrew. You know Hebrew because of hallelujah.

[15:34] It's Hebrew. You can also say it because Hosanna. We all know Hebrew. Isn't that fancy? Amen. The word Hosanna is not a Greek word.

It's not originally Greek. This is a transliteration of a Hebrew word. And it carries so much weight that Matthew said, I'm not even going to change it.

I'm going to transliterate that word into the Greek, into my notes here. And so this language comes from Psalm 118 as we open the service with.

Save us, it means. It means save us, we pray, O Lord. Literally means save now. Please save. Save now.

Please save. And so you have to understand what's going on upon the foundation of God's orchestration of history. Everything is unfolding, pointing to something significant in the Old Testament.

[16:37] When the crowds cry Hosanna, they're not offering just a simple praise. Like praise the Lord. Something's happening. Carmen's out there. I don't know what's happening, but this is fun. Right?

Hosanna! But they're making a request. This is an informed request for those who know what is taking place. They see this man coming on a donkey.

They know the prophecy of Zachariah. And they shout, Hosanna. Save now. Please save. It's a request.

Do you see something, though? They're saying the right things. That is the right thing to be saying. But context of this passage suggests a problem.

There's a little bit of a problem because if that is true, that they are making the right claims, then why does this city who cry out Hosanna turn around and cry out crucify Him?

[17:54] Within just a number of days. The cry, save us! Please save! turns into kill Him! To answer that, we have to understand what they expected by the word save, by the word Hosanna and what it actually meant.

And so in section two, let's take a look at that. This is the Hosanna they wanted. It's worthy of our time to really zoom in upon this cry of Hosanna.

Because what we will find is that they were not crying out in vague, abstract terms or anything. Their expectations had been shaped by the promises of Scripture.

And especially given through Zechariah, which Matthew has helped us to put this entire scene within context of the Old Testament to help us. And Jesus began to unfold that here.

So let's start where Matthew started us. Let's start where Jesus began with the cult. Zechariah prophesied that this would happen of a coming day when Israel's suffering would end.

[19:13] When the nations that oppressed them would be judged. When Jerusalem would be restored. restored. And not only restored but expanded. It would be like what we see with the book of Acts just an expansion of God's kingdom once again.

When sin would be cleansed and when God's people would finally flourish as a light of the nations. And now diving even deeper into the book of Zechariah.

That's in Zechariah 9. He prophesied of a coming king. This coming king was known as the branch in Zechariah's prophecy.

And this would be someone who would rule as both priest and king. Bringing peace and establishing a kingdom that would stretch the ends of the earth.

And so in Zechariah 9 which is cited here that king that branch is described in two ways that must be held together.

[20:25] He comes humble and he comes riding on a donkey. There's got to be humility riding on a donkey like that, right? No one who has pride will come in riding on a donkey.

but this also is one who rules from sea to sea. Not only is he humble riding on a donkey this is one according to Zechariah's prophecy one who's going to conquer.

One who's going to actually bring peace to the nations and exercising dominion over all. And so that's Zechariah. That's the footing that Matthew gives us in his gospel here.

This is where Jesus sets the framework of history and then begins to fulfill it. And so when the cries of the crowd come and they see that they see the donkey they see the man coming they shout those who know what is taking place blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

They are not just this isn't just random language here. They're actually drawing from Old Testament language from Psalm 118 that was sung at Passover and it all recounts when Israel remembered God's saving power.

[21:54] They're saying that what Zechariah said is happening now Hosanna Hosanna in the highest save us we pray oh Lord Hosanna but here's the

problem they were defining the word based upon what their needs were what their expectations of salvation were what they thought it should look like and they assumed they assumed you know Israel at this time they lived under Roman occupation they the the nation of Israel here a nation within a nation they were taxed like crazy they were controlled they were constantly reminded that they were not free and so within the context of their lives they cried out for deliverance but directly related to Roman rule so what were they thinking they're thinking of political liberation they're thinking man we got our we got our leader to overthrow the Roman government this is liberation time right it's immediate it's going to be immediate it's going to be visible change in other words they were thinking politically when this whole time

God was thinking salvifically related to something deeper than their circumstances around they're right about who Jesus was but they were wrong about what he came to do and so when you come back a little bit and you're scratching your head how did they go from Hosanna to crucify him well you get your answer here they shouted the right words but they failed to recognize what God intended to do they did not understand that before the triumph would come there would be humility there would first be rejection there would first be suffering they wanted the crown without the cross I love how John Calvin observed that Zach calls the people to rejoice even while they were still in suffering the people in

Zach his day didn't necessarily want relief and Calvin actually brings this home he says that while they were rejoicing in this day as the temple was laid in ruin and the temple was beginning to be rebuilt Zachariah was the prophet during the time of Ezra and so there's this building rebuilding of the temple and recovering they're standing in rubble!

they wanted salvation that fit their agenda and that misunderstanding doesn't stay hidden for very long because here we understand we're going to expand the book of Zachariah into section three because what we'll see is the hosanna that God gave the save now save please it was painfully clear by the end of the week the one that they wanted

Jesus Christ to be for them painfully clear because the same prophet who spoke of the coming king in Zachariah chapter nine which Matthew helps us understand that context this is all to fulfill a prophecy well you know context is king context really helps it'll save you from a lot of trouble with heresy and false teaching context king well Zachariah actually spoke about something else within context imagine that there were more verses that came after chapter nine chapter 10 and 11 and 12 all sorts of goodies after that right and Zachariah says that this king would actually be rejected they forgot about that part that he would be sold for 30 pieces of silver in chapter 12 that he would be wounded and that the shepherd would be struck and the sheep would be scattered!

[27:45] just as Zechariah 12 10 says they will look on me on him whom they have pierced in other words within God's economy God's sovereignty the king does not come first to conquer like riding riding on a military horse no he comes first to suffer he does not come first to destroy the enemies around and set the record straight rather he comes to deal with the sin within the enemies of God and this is the precise moment where the crowd's expectations began to fall apart and if we're honest our expectations fall apart as well at this exact moment don't we still cry Hosanna in our lives we still want to be saved but we often define what that saving looks like sometimes very narrowly to kind of relieve burdens to make life better we want relief from pressure whether that might be a difficult boss or an issue with a friend we want relief from this pressure we want rescue from our circumstances we want peace without repentance we want blessing without surrender in other words we want a king to fix our circumstances we got the same problem here in 2026 as it were there but Jesus comes as a king who confronts our sin not necessarily our circumstances he comes humble he comes righteous he comes to save but not in a way that we would naturally ever expect!

Jesus did not come to meet your expectations church he didn't he came to save your soul so the question for Palm Sunday forces us to ask is is not whether we will cry out Hosanna we all will but

will we actually mean it like do you want Jesus as the fixer of your life or as the king who saves your soul do you cry out because your circumstances are difficult or because you recognize that your greatest need above all things is forgiveness friends a true Hosanna sounds like this save me from my self rule save me from my sin save me from my false expectations even if your salvation comes through a cross before a crown save me cry out today meaning what you say and

God has promised to save you by your faith in him and here's the good news maybe you don't know Jesus Christ maybe this is all new to you maybe different than the gospel message from the church down the road could be a good thing or a bad thing but if that cry if that is your cry today to save you from your sin to save you from your self rule to save you from false expectations!

God does not turn that away the one they pierced the one they rejected is the one who saves the king who was rejected is the king who saves sinners the shepherd that shepherds humanity who was struck is the shepherd who gathers the sheep again and so come crying out Hosanna but make sure you mean it in the right context to save you from your sin doesn't mean that life is going to be perfect I don't know if you join the Christians at a church because you thought all of sudden life would be put together and all things would work out no God has given you shoulders to bear upon to be encouraged through to lift you up to guide you and to help you to walk worthy in the manner of the

Lord come not pretending come not negotiating come not redefining salvation on your own terms but come crying save me and trusting him to do that his way that's for unbelievers I think we might actually have an opposite danger as a church I think there's a danger that we can't ignore here for those who actually are crying out to God to save you from your sin being within the fold of God being saved from your sin some of us sometimes don't reject Jesus Christ outright right we just simply sometimes refuse to yield to him within our lives like we're comfortable in calling him savior we'll shout hosanna the top of our lungs and actually mean it hosanna to save you from your sin but as long as that doesn't press into our lives too much as

[33:58] Jesus being Lord as well as savior we sing hosanna but quietly reserve these areas in our lives where he's not welcome to rule that yet right am I talking to anyone yeah and if we're honest it shows in our lives it shows it shows in a faith that's visible on Sunday hands raised hosanna in the highest but it's absent from the rest of the week it shows in a heart that hears but resists obedience it shows in a life that blends easily in with the world rather than standing distinctly for Jesus Christ it shows in a home where Jesus Christ is confessed but rarely ever followed the problem is we want him close enough to help us don't we but not close enough to rule us that is a problem that

I think that we have when we think about crying out Hosanna and church hear this clearly and lovingly because I wouldn't say the hard stuff unless I loved you I do do not cry Hosanna rightly if you're unwilling to be ruled by the king that you are praising Jesus is both savior and lord you can't have one or the other and if you don't have him as lord who are we to confess him as savior you see that disconnect we always wonder how people can come to him in the last day like Matthew says come to him lord lord didn't we do this in your name and this in your name and this in your name some of us will say lord we cried hosanna and we wanted you to save us and this the dark reality of this whole thing is that he will say to some in that day depart from me

I never knew you you never let me rule your life you wanted me as savior on your own terms but you didn't want to give me this area or that area church you know your hearts you know what that area looks like and I pray that you deal with that today the same voice that cries save me must bow to that same person and say rule me the good news is that there is grace available to us who have had that disconnect between savior and lord the passage is not about fixing yourself and then come clean yourself up and then come but the call is to come and be saved come as you are yes but not on your own terms come ready to be forgiven but ready to be changed

Hosanna is not the cry of people who need a life upgrade Hosanna is not the cry of people who intend to self rule no Hosanna is the cry of people who know who know they cannot save themselves who know that they are reluctant to give Jesus 100% of their life not 99.999 it's the cry of people who know they can't save themselves and cannot order their lives themselves ones who are ready to be saved and willingly!

ruled by the king you see it the point a true cry to God is not about removing discomfort but by removing sin so say it church not casually not sentimentally not on your own terms not just because everyone else is doing it no say it like this save me rule me and even if your salvation comes through suffering and a cross before it comes to a crown say it and trust that king who came in humility that king who suffered and who was pierced this king delights to save and he is really good at ruling will you be saved today but not only that will you be ruled let's pray let's