

The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, with its tensions and worldly drama, puts all the efforts of evil on full display. Yet, in stark contrast, it depicts love triumphing over every form of hate as Christ lays down his life for the ungodly and “makes intercession for the transgressors.”¹ St. Mark’s narrative of these events moves quickly from Mary of Bethany’s extravagant gift of costly perfume that anointed Jesus beforehand for burial to the Passover feast, which prefigures Israel’s deliverance from slavery and looks forward to the ultimate liberation of God’s people. Jesus, the true Paschal Lamb, would offer his body and blood for the price of our redemption. Then, from the celebration of the Last Supper, events move quickly to his betrayal by Judas, his anguish in Gethsemane, followed by his arrest and trials before the Sanhedrin and Pilate, ultimately culminating in the horrific agony of his crucifixion at the hands of Roman authorities.

The drama of His Passion sweeps across the landscapes of our hearts and exposes our imperfect responses to Christ, as seen by the various parts congregational members read today. It is seen in **Peter’s weakness. It is seen in the disciples’ fearfulness, Pilate’s self-interest, Caiaphas’ lack of principle, Herod’s triviality, the crowd’s fickleness, and Judas’ love of money and hardness of heart.** Through their stories, the masks over our hearts are ripped away. We, too, find that our hearts are divided. I am like the crowd. I am like Peter. I am like Judas.

Consequently, we need our Lord to save and help us. This need for help was the cry of Palm Sunday when the crowd along

¹ Isaiah 53:12

the roadside shouted, “Hosanna! Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”²

The word Hosanna was an expression used in Hebrew that was more than a cry for help.³ In contemporary language, it means, “Save us now!” In its context, it was a prayer for God’s blessing upon the Messiah, who would bring to pass the salvation promised to Israel.

This confident cry for help was to the One who would bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. It was addressed to the meek and lowly One who “did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, … and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”⁴ The magnitude of it fills us with holy awe at the love that caused our Lord to endure every imaginable form of suffering for us and our salvation. The scope of it is “so amazing and so divine” that it demands a response.

The One who came to Jerusalem humbly riding on a donkey now comes to us. Will we welcome him? Will we enter Holy Week not as mere observers but as participants? Will we worship him? Will we serve him? Will we love him? May the shout of Hosanna be our heartfelt cry as we begin “the contemplation of those mighty acts”⁵ that not only bring life and immortality but also “peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven!”⁶ *Amen.*

² Luke 19:38 and Mark 11:9

³ Strong’s Concordance, #5614, hosanna, save, we pray

⁴ Philippians 2:6-8 (shortened)

⁵ Collect for the Liturgy of the Palms, for Palm Sunday, BCP p. 270

⁶ Luke 19:38