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Psalm 118: 1-2 & 19-29 & Matthew 21:1-11 & Matthew 27:27-37

“Let us Shout Hosanna”

### **Psalm 118: 1-2 & 19-29**

<sup>1</sup>O give thanks to the Lord, for God is good; God's steadfast love endures forever! <sup>2</sup>Let Israel say, 'God's steadfast love endures forever.' <sup>19</sup>Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord. <sup>20</sup>This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it. <sup>21</sup>I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. <sup>22</sup>The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. <sup>23</sup>This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. <sup>24</sup>This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. <sup>25</sup>Save us, we beseech you, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech you, give us success! <sup>26</sup>Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord. <sup>27</sup>The Lord is God, who has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar. <sup>28</sup>You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will extol you. <sup>29</sup>O give thanks to the Lord, for God is good, for God's steadfast love endures forever.

*Palm Sunday kicks off Holy Week for Protestants and Catholics around the world. This is a week when the Lord of Life will face death; a week when he will cleanse the temple of the moneychangers and praise a widow for putting all she had into the offering box. A week when he will teach about authority that comes from God. During this week he will break bread and offer the cup of forgiveness, knowing even as he does that one friend will betray him and another will deny he ever knew him. This week, our Messiah will be arrested, tried, beaten, convicted, and sentenced to death as a common criminal. But before all of that takes place his followers celebrated with shouts of joy as Jesus entered Jerusalem. So today let us listen for God's Word for us as we read together from the Gospel of:*

### **Matthew 21:1-11 & 27:27-37**

<sup>1</sup>When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>If anyone says anything to you, just say this, "The Lord needs them." And he will send them immediately.' <sup>4</sup>This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, <sup>5</sup>'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.' <sup>6</sup>The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; <sup>7</sup>they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. <sup>8</sup>A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup>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!**' <sup>10</sup>When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?' <sup>11</sup>The crowds were saying, '**This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.**'

*and then from the 27<sup>th</sup> chapter, verses 27-37*

<sup>27</sup>Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. <sup>28</sup>They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, <sup>29</sup>and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' <sup>30</sup>They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on

the head. <sup>31</sup>After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. <sup>32</sup> As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. <sup>33</sup>And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), <sup>34</sup>they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. <sup>35</sup>And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; <sup>36</sup>then they sat down there and kept watch over him. <sup>37</sup>Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.'

This the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

### "Let Us Cry Hosanna"

When I was in high school, I was involved in a theater program in downtown Charleston, SC. This meant I was downtown at least two times a week to attend master classes and when I was working on a show I was downtown every day. Generally, I was relatively immune to the tourist traffic and congestion...it was just a fact of life you learned to deal with from April through October. The worst times were when any movie or television show was in town to film. This would mean the streets were even more packed with "lookey loos" who wanted to see whichever celebrity was on hand. One day it was particularly bad. Bruce Willis was in town to film one of his movies. The streets, which were already packed with tourists, were mobbed. I had just left the theater and couldn't even make it to my car. There on the street that day, I had no idea what was going on or who was in the center of the crowd, but the excitement in the air was electric. Before I knew it, I was asking, "What's going on? Who is it?"

I imagine those living in Jerusalem that Passover season so long ago could probably relate. Living in Jerusalem sure had its perks, but being there for the Passover had to have been a real pain. You see the whole nation basically flooded the Holy City in order to celebrate the High Holy Days there. On top of that, the Roman Empire would also flood the city with soldiers to remind those who were celebrating the Liberating Power of God that the Romans, not God, controlled Jerusalem now.

So, Jesus enters into a city is packed with Good, Faithful Jews and Roman soldiers. In Matthew's Gospel we are told that when Jesus entered Jerusalem on that day, "*the whole city was in turmoil asking, 'Who is this?'*" **Turmoil** is actually a weak translation of the Greek verb *seio* which refers to the action of an earthquake. This crowd gathered to see Jesus were **shaking** with expectation – looking for the promised King of the Jews. They were shaking their physical surroundings as they snapped branches off of nearby trees and spread their cloaks on the ground before Jesus. They were **shaking** the emotional underpinnings of the Holy City with their cries of "Hosanna!" Hosanna is an exclamation of praise that literally means "save, I pray".

**"Hosanna, Save us"** they shouted to Jesus in the face of governors and political leaders who had previously entered the city atop war horses in huge caravans. **"Hosanna, Save us!"** they shouted to Jesus in the face of the Roman soldiers who preserved their control by threat of violence and death. **"Hosanna, Save Us!"** they shouted to Jesus in the face of Jewish political leaders who preserved their power by taxing more than was necessary even as they ignored the needs of the poor. **"Hosanna, Save Us!"** they shouted to Jesus in the face of Religious leaders who preserved their power by stringently enforcing purity rituals as a way of forcing out those who most needed to feel close to God. **"Hosanna, Save Us!"** they shouted not to the mighty and powerful but to a gentle man on a donkey – whose humble entrance disrupts everyone's expectations for how kings move in the world.

If you read today's lesson from the Gospel of Matthew with a literal eye, you would think this Gentle Jesus was straddling two beasts of burden like some circus act as he entered Jerusalem.

In fact, the author of Matthew was simply trying to underline the connection of this moment with the poetic language of Zechariah's prophecy and the promises from Psalm 118. This Jesus is the promised Prince of Peace; This Jesus humbly comes on the back of animals of peace, but his life, his teachings, his love will transform the ways of war into the ways of harmony. His life demonstrates that God's Steadfast Love Endures forever.

To this man riding a borrowed donkey, these crowds shouted "Hosanna, Save us!". Save us from corruption. Save us from war. Save us from division. Save us from starvation.

Save us! Save us, O God, only you can. Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

As we read this story today, I trust that this Gentle Jesus comes riding through the gates of our hearts into equally tense times in our world. Hosanna! We've been saying it all morning. Hosanna! We've been singing it all morning. Hosanna! Save Us!

As Jesus travels the long walk of our hearts this week, what powers will he confront? What principalities does he need to challenge? Who will he run out of the temple? I could create for you a long list of things for which I cry Hosanna this day. Hosanna, Save us from gun culture. Hosanna, Save us from trans and homophobia. Hosanna, Save us from racism, classism. Hosanna, Save us from fear and depression and anxiety.

But I wonder, as we begin this Holy Week, with our feet firmly planted on our cloak covered Palm Sunday Procession, do we have the courage and conviction to cry out "Hosanna, Save us!" Do we trust this Gentle Jesus will set the prisoners free? Knowing how Jesus was reviled and eventually killed, do we trust this Gentle Jesus (on his pathetic donkey) enough to walk with him through the crowded city streets of our lives and shout Hosanna, Save Us in the faces of the powers and principalities that dictate so many parts of our lives?

Hosanna, Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna! Save us!

Amen.