

“Save Us Now!”

If you had been standing there in that first Palm Sunday crowd as Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey, what would you have heard? If you were listening in the original languages spoken by the people of Jesus’ day, you would have heard something that sounded like **“Jesus!” “Jesus!” “Jesus!” over and over again.**

It was not necessarily that the people were calling out the name that Jesus had been given by his parents. Instead, they were describing what they wanted Jesus to do for them. **You see, the word “Jesus” sounds very similar to the word “Hosanna” in the original language of the Bible. Not only do the two words “Jesus” and “Hosanna” sound alike, they share the same root and have nearly identical meanings. They both mean, “save, deliver, rescue.”**

You might think back to the Christmas account and the angel who appeared to Joseph in a dream. The angel told Joseph what he was to name the child Mary was going to give birth to and the reason why. The angel said, **“You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).** Therefore, people’s shouts of “Hosanna” were certainly directed to the right person. **Jesus’ sole purpose for coming into this world was to save, to rescue, to deliver people. But FROM WHAT were the people looking for Jesus to save them? They weren’t so much concerned about their sin. They were looking for Jesus to save them from the problems and hardships that they were experiencing.**

The Jews were at best second-rate citizens in the Roman Empire. The power and prestige of the nation of Israel had long-since faded.

They had no king, no real power or influence, no real place to call their own. At present, the Jews got along with the Roman only because they didn’t really have much of a choice but to get along. It had been a long, bloody history where Israel always seemed to come out on the losing end. The Jews looked forward to the day when things would be reversed, and Israel would once again resume what they believed to be its rightful position of power and prestige within the world, a time when life would be good.

Finally, they thought they had found the person to make all these dreams come true. They looked to Jesus and called out, **“Jesus. Hosanna! Save us now!”** They believed that Jesus could give them exactly what they were looking for, **someone who would make their lives easier and more comfortable.**

After all, Jesus certainly seemed to possess the power they were looking for. Jesus’ reputation had grown throughout Israel during the last three years.

He had demonstrated his power and his care in the miracles he performed, healing the sick and suffering, providing free food for thousands.

And just recently, he had even raised a dead man named Lazarus back to life. Yes, they called to Jesus to **“Hosanna! Save us! Save us from our problems! Rescue us from the ruthless Romans! Restore our nation! Make our lives better! Jesus, save us now!”**

Sound familiar? In many people’s minds, that’s what religion is. Religion is about making God into the type of god that THEY want him to be. Developing a god that gives you what you want, that fits within the life that you want to live. It is a god that will fix your problems, and make you healthy, wealthy, successful, and popular. A god who save you from life’s problems. In reality, it’s not so much about who GOD actually is, but what YOU want god to be and to do for you.

Do we ever find ourselves slipping into that mindset when it comes to Jesus?

Do we reduce Jesus to a savior whose primary purpose is to save us from the problems that we are right now experiencing in this life?

Do we make Jesus into someone who is merely supposed to make our lives easier?

“Jesus, save me from this difficulty I am facing. Jesus, save me from this mountain of debt. Jesus, save me from this sadness and loneliness. Jesus save me from this pain and suffering.”

Can Jesus take those problems away? Absolutely he can. Can he and does he help us through those problems? Absolutely. But if that’s the ONLY type of Savior Jesus is, someone who fixes our problems in this life, then Jesus is the biggest fraud and phony that has ever lived. If Jesus ONLY came to save us from the problems that we are right now experiencing, then what has Jesus really accomplished?

The very real problems that we face in this life are symptoms of a much larger problem – **a problem called sin.** We see the symptoms of sin all around us and inside of us.

We see them in the selfishness of man more concerned about how something will affect me than someone else.

We see it in the hatred that causes people to harm others with their words and actions.

We see the symptoms of sin in our bodies and minds – sickness, disease, confusion, loss of abilities.

We see the symptoms of sin in nature, as natural disasters suddenly strike causing death and destruction.

We see the symptom of sin as we stand beside the grave of a loved one and the sadness sweeps over us with the separation we now face.

I suppose that Jesus could have just addressed the symptoms of our sin, giving you a life that would be temporarily enjoyable, but Jesus knew better, he wanted better for us.

Jesus did not come into this world to be some sort of aspirin or cortisone shot that brings some temporary relief. Jesus came to be the cure for sin. **Jesus came to “save his people from their sin.” And what did that rescue require? It required Palm Sunday.**

At the beginning of this sermon I asked you what you would have HEARD if you were standing among the crowd on that first Palm Sunday. Now I want you to imagine what you would have SEEN. Just imagine. You would have seen a man riding on a donkey – a man that looked like any other 33 year-old Jewish man of his day. I want you to look past his mere appearance and look at Jesus through the words of Philippians 2 which you heard read this morning. **This man Jesus is none other than the King of glory, the Lord God Almighty who created and rules over all things. You cannot see his glory because he has chosen to put it aside for a time.** He has chosen to live like us, with the same limitations and restrictions that we do. He has come to take our place. He has come to take our place not only in the life, but also in death.

In just five days from Palm Sunday, Jesus would leave Jerusalem, not riding a donkey but carrying a cross. The praise of, “Save us!” would be replaced with the mockery, “Save yourself!” Jesus would go to suffer and die in our place, and in the place of all people. While on the cross, Jesus would suffer the eternal separation from God that sin deserves, so that when our life here on earth comes to an end, we will never need to experience that separation from God.

In one week from Palm Sunday, Jesus would rise from the dead and again make full use of the divine power and glory that was his as the King of glory. With his resurrection, Jesus would proclaim that he has the power to rescue people permanently from this sinful world.

Jesus would transform death so that for all those who believe in him death is now the beginning of a life away from every symptom of this sinful world.

You see, Jesus is not just some spiritual cortisone shot to bring some temporary relief from the symptoms of life in this sinful world. Jesus is the cure for sin. Deliverer, Savior. He is our Jesus!

That is the cure that Jesus delivers every time a child is baptized. As the Holy Spirit creates faith in Jesus and gives to that child what he has promised – forgiveness of sins and the promise of life eternal in heaven.

That is the cure that Jesus delivers every time a person hears about Jesus and by the Holy Spirit’s power, trusts that Jesus is their deliverer who will bring them to eternal life.

That is the cure that Jesus delivers to us as we receive the Lord’s Supper and hear Jesus announce, “Your sins are forgiven. I will see you in heaven one day.”

That is the cure that strengthens us to face the symptoms of life in this sinful world, knowing that one day they will all be over, that Jesus will deliver, save, rescue us from this world to be with him in heaven’s glory.

What do you hear, what do you see as Jesus enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday? We hear the cries of, “Hosanna!” to the King of Glory who makes his way to cross to save us, not merely for now, but to save us from our sins, to save us for eternity. Amen.