

*As follows in Jesus' name:*

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, 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 anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once."

This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, "Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. 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 cut branches from the trees and spread them 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!" (ESV)

*This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen.* (John 17:17)

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

The chanting of the crowd that day, it almost sounds like a political demonstration, doesn't it?

With the people chanting their slogans, hoping that Jesus would become the next ruler of Judea.

There were certainly people who desired that, especially in comparison with the Roman occupation.

But this is not a political demonstration.

You can even hear it in their singing. "**Hosanna to the Son of David!**

**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"**

These are not the words of an angry, rebellious mob or a coup attempt.

They are not chanting against the current authorities...

They are blessing Someone and praying for salvation (Hosanna means "save now").

You see, the great crowd was not assembling only because of Jesus.

The crowds were gathering because they were on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover.

This was one of the three "pilgrimage" festivals that God had required of His people in the OT Law.

Every year, 3 times a year, the heads of households were commanded to go to the tabernacle/temple and celebrate the feast... and receive the Lord's blessings... and offer the appointed sacrifices.

But, while only the heads of houses were required to go, we know they often brought their families.

In fact, only a few verses later we hear the children in the temple surrounding Jesus the next day, singing "**Hosanna to the Son of David!"** on repeat from what they heard the day before.

**Out of the mouth of babes, right?**

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So perhaps you can imagine gathering for Easter, not with just your immediate family, but with everyone from your community and surrounding areas.

And imagine that you are traveling, not in your air-conditioned car on cruise control... but on foot... with all these people.

And that this trip doesn't take just 5 - 7 hours, like driving to Eastern Washington, but 5 - 7 days, walking/hiking to the top of Snoqualmie Pass with all your family & your provisions, maybe even a lamb or a bull or other offerings to be given at the temple.

So there is lots and lots of time with your immediate and extended family and neighbors.

So what did parents and the pilgrims do? They used the opportunity to pass on their faith.

They sang together... much like some families still do to this day.

They would sing the Psalms on their way to Jerusalem.

And like us today... they had specific Psalms they would sing for certain festivals.

Like we sing, “*Hosanna, Loud, Hosanna,*” on Palm Sunday,  
they sang Psalm 118 throughout the Passover pilgrimage and celebration.  
The psalm praises the Lord for His deliverance; and wasn’t that what the Passover celebrated,  
His great deliverance from their slavery in Egypt under the tyranny of Pharaoh?

And what a wonderful way to share & develop their godly identity, vocabulary and traditions.  
The parents were teaching their children these important songs of their deliverance,  
the children were learning their religious heritage and how to confess their faith,  
they saw the importance to Mom and Dad, and Grandma and Grandpa, and uncles and aunts,  
and friends and neighbors...  
You see, it wasn’t just dad getting in the car and driving, making it to the destination in record time.  
The trip, the pilgrimage itself, was a big part of the whole experience.  
There you learned the hymns, through repetition, so that you would know them for the Passover.  
And there would be lots of opportunities for questions to be asked and answered,  
Bible History to be learned, conversations about faith and life and how these intersect.

But consider, how much effort it takes to develop this type of tradition in your family,  
especially if you have not had the experience in your life before.  
How much easier is it to always turn on the radio in the car or constantly play games on the tablets,  
than it is to turn them off and talk about how what was heard or seen would be pleasing to the Lord?  
How much easier is it to sit in front of the TV for dinner, or binge Netflix with the family for hours,  
than it is to find a couple minutes to have a family devotion?  
How much more enjoyable to we find reading a novel,  
while reading the Word of God for a few minutes proves to be a drudgery.  
It is not that the radio, games on tablets or phones , TV or streaming are absolutely wrong,  
but how often do these tools and distractions distract us from those things that are truly necessary  
for eternal life and salvation?  
How often do they portray or teach something that is contrary to your belief and confession,  
and yet, the little eyes and ears that see or hear them along with you are not taught  
what is good, right, and salutary in God’s eyes?

But building a Christian culture in your home is much more work and takes discipline to develop.  
Home devotions take time and they take time together as a family.  
They take time to develop a pattern, time to answer questions, time to be willing to learn new things.  
And they work best when they are regular and expected, rather than sporadic and surprising.  
It’s the same with attendance at church. If it is sporadic, then it gives the impression  
that it is really a matter of convenience, rather than of importance and priority.  
And what a blessing if you were raised in a home that had this *habitus*;  
you have seen and experienced it.  
Are you sharing that same experience and passing down the gifts received with the next generations?  
But what if you never experienced such a Christian environment at home as you were growing up?  
Maybe Christianity is something new to you and your family.  
Maybe you are taking renewed interest in it because you have a family of your own now.

Know that the effort is worth it. And also know that it isn’t your own doing.  
Any Christian culture developed among us is not our own doing by the Holy Spirit’s.

It is He alone who can give us a willing and steadfast heart, not only to do what is faithful,  
but also to continually believe that our failings are covered in Christ's blood  
and hold the blessing given at baptism, that He will fulfill what you are unable to do.

...

What a blessing for the Jewish people who had developed and received and passed on such traditions.  
Think of the significance for the children as they sang these words from Ps. 118,  
walking into the gates of Jerusalem,

**Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, And I will praise the Lord.**

**This is the gate of the Lord, Through which the righteous shall enter.** <sup>Psalm 118:19-20</sup>

And on this particular day, that first Palm Sunday (as we call it), Psalm 118 had even more significance.  
Though the crowd sang the whole Psalm, St. Matthew emphasized for his readers only verses 25-26.

The people sang, **Hosanna**, that is **Save now, I pray, O Lord...**

**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!**

This Psalm was about Jesus. He was not coming to be their political ruler, but their Savior.

And not just the Savior of the Jewish nation, delivering them from Pharaoh and Egyptian slavery,  
but the Savior of the entire world, delivering us from Satan's tyranny and our slavery to sin.

He came to be the sacrifice with His own body and His holy blood to atone for your sins.

Though you have not always gladly heard and learned God's holy Word,

Jesus perfectly listened to the Word of His Father, and He obeyed His Father's will  
all the way to the cross for you.

We have often been preoccupied and excessive with ungodly and wasteful amusements,

but Jesus stayed focused on winning your salvation by taking all your shortcomings and sins  
on Himself and paying for them all through His death.

Where we have neglected or fallen short of teaching and training the faith to those under our care,

Jesus never fell short of His perfect obedience and did not neglect to cover your sins in His death.

You see, Palm Sunday was the 10th day of Nisan, the day on which the Children of Israel were to select  
their passover lambs.

So Jesus came, riding into Jerusalem as the appointed **Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world.**

What a valuable song Psalm 118 is, and other hymns like, *Hosanna, Loud, Hosanna* are,  
to learn and memorize and sing, so that Jesus and His word can dwell in you richly.

While we live on this earth, "**Hosanna to the Son of David,**" is our constant song,  
that is, **Save Now, Oh Son of David,** our Lord and Redeemer.

And it is our constant song, as we prepare to receive Jesus' body and blood for that forgiveness.

Here He comes among us as His Word is spoken and sung; He comes to be with us & give us peace.

Here He gathers us around Himself with our fellow brothers and sisters and fathers of the faith,  
to hear, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest His declaration of forgiveness through His blood.

Here He comes to us, gentle and lowly today, not on a donkey, but with bread and wine.

Here He comes to give us perseverance and resolve to continually learn for ourselves of His grace,  
and to teach and train those we are responsible of their Savior and Lord.

Yes, **"Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies, [the Lord has] prepared praise"**. <sup>Matthew 21:16</sup>

May it be that we give them those words of praise and salvation that He has prepared for them,  
that they may sing them all the days of their life, both in this life, and the life to come.

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

*Soli Deo Gloria*