

Luke 19:28-40 *After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ³⁰“Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it.’” ³²Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. ³³As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” ³⁴They replied, “The Lord needs it.” ³⁵They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. ³⁶As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. ³⁷When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: ³⁸“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” ³⁹Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!” ⁴⁰“I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”*

Dear friends in Christ our Savior,

Save us now! That’s what the people were shouting. It’s three words in English but only one in the original: Hosanna! They were shouting at their king who was going forward to fight a battle. They could feel the excitement and enthusiasm building with each step the donkey took. They knew the prophecy and began to understand that thousands of years of history was about to be fulfilled right before their very eyes. They were shouting and singing so loudly the Pharisees asked Jesus to make them stop. The atmosphere was festive. They laid their cloaks and palm branches before him as a royal carpet for his donkey to walk on. They were celebrating their king with shouts of: “Save us now!” But the question that needs to be answered is: From what? Save us from what?

This is important for us to understand. We gather together today with the same shouts of Hosanna! How many times has that word come out of our mouths already in this service? Save us now! But from what? What are asking God to save us from? The answer to this question makes a big difference on how we are going to view the rest of the week before us. Our answer to this question is going to set up our expectations for what we are going to encounter as we go through this week. It will either make or break our celebration as we gather in God’s house a week from now. It’s important for us know what we are asking God to save us from as we shout Hosanna to our King on this Palm Sunday.

We certainly see how the answer to this question affected the people who gathered in Jerusalem that day. Their answer to this question gave them unrealistic expectations which left them disappointed and disillusioned by the end of the week—so much so that their Hosanna’s on Sunday quickly turned to “Crucify! Crucify!” on Friday. They were looking for a king. They found themselves under heavy Roman oppression. They faced heavy taxes and restrictions and numerous executions by crucifixion. They desired a conqueror who would set them free from this rule. They had seen the mighty works that this man Jesus had done. Jesus spent the night prior to his triumphant entry in Bethany, where he had recently raised Lazarus from the dead after he had been in the grave for 4 days. News about this miracle had spread and people were eager to catch a glimpse of Jesus. When Jesus arranged for a donkey to ride into Jerusalem, their excitement level jumped. They remembered the prophecy from Zechariah about the Messiah riding a donkey into Jerusalem and realized Jesus was doing exactly what had been prophesied. The timing was right as they were about to celebrate the Passover which celebrated God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Now, perhaps God was doing the same thing at the same time. They were excited that the one for whom Israel had waited for so long had finally come. They assumed Jesus was going forward to do battle to lead them from the restraints and cruel treatment that they had received from the Roman government. So they shouted at the tops of their lungs, “Hosanna! Save us now!”

But while their shouts of praise came from their voices, but they did not come from the voice of faith. They put their faith in Jesus but not for the right reason. When Jesus willingly allowed himself to be arrested by the Jewish leaders and didn’t even try to defend himself before the Roman governor, they abandoned him. In their embarrassment for putting their faith in the wrong person, they wanted to just get rid of him. When Jesus did not rise up as they expected, their cheering stopped. Those cheers very quickly turned to jeers. Their perceptions of who the Messiah was going to be and what they wanted in a Messiah blinded them from seeing the truth that was right before their eyes. These perceptions kept them from seeing in Jesus the Messiah he came to be and the battle he came to fight. With their expectations dashed, they threw this imposter under the bus and called for his execution.

So expectations for this week are important! It’s important we have crystal clear in our mind the reason for which we want Jesus to save us! Many have the expectations that Jesus came to rule their lives so that they can live the glorious life now. It’s easy to cheer Jesus when everything is going our way. When he rises to our cause and brings a glorious success to our lives, we easily cheer him and praise him for his goodness. When he does what we want and we aren’t facing any immediate problems, we easily celebrate his love for us. But what about during those times when trouble and difficulty come our way? What happens when life isn’t so glorious, at least as glorious as we had expectations for? When trials come our way and we have to suffer through difficulties, we can find ourselves just as disappointed and disillusioned as the Israelites in Jerusalem—but often because we had wrong expectations. We cry out, “Save us now!” but we mean from our earthly troubles and challenges. When immediate help doesn’t come our cheering comes to a stop. Words of adoration and praise very quickly fade when we experience life as it really is. Our cheers for God today can quickly become grumbles and complaints tomorrow when life takes a sudden turn. Our joy in God today changes to doubt and questions

as we are asked to face challenges. All of this disappointment comes from an unrealistic view of who Jesus is and what are expectations are of him.

Though the eyes of faith, God has led us to see the Savior who Jesus came to be. We, too, shout, "Hosanna! Save us now!" but we understand that what Jesus came to save us from is the guilt and punishment we deserve for our sins. We today see our King going forward to defeat the devil and pay for our sins. We see God's son perfectly fulfill the prophecies about him to carry out the work the Father sent him to do. We see our substitute willing to offer his life in place of ours. We see our King stepping forward to protect us from our enemy and conquer him once and for all. We see our king who came not to bring peace to this world from earthly conflict, but peace between God and man in the forgiveness of sins and victory over the grave. Jesus came to give his people the glorious life that they will enjoy not on this earth but forever in heaven. He came to offer us peace in the midst of the conflict. With this peace, we have the confidence that even in the worst of adversity, God loves us. He is with us. He watches over us, protects and guides us and through his word will lead us to the green pastures of eternal life.

To this King we cry, "Hosanna! Save us now!" With that cry we confess our sins and recognize the punishment we deserve for them. With this cry, we abandon all hope of saving ourselves or finding some assurance of heaven in our good behavior. With this cry, we come before him spiritually naked in sin and broken and look to him for the clothing of his robe of righteousness and healing through the forgiveness he offers. Because of this healing and peace he brings to us, we can cry to him with our pains, our hurts, our confusion, our problems, our fears, and our doubts about his love for us. And his answer comes back to us through his word every single time: I am your King. Jesus hanging from that cross is proof of God's forgiveness and love. He's the proof that the Lord can help you. He's the proof that God will help you, comfort you, encourage you, strengthen you, and equip you for every good work. When we cry out in faith, "Save us now," he reminds us every time how he did that with his life, death and resurrection.

Having this answer to the question "From what?" will affect our view of this week before us. There will be some somber moments as we gather before our Lord this week. On Maundy Thursday, as we will gather before our Lord to ponder the supper that he instituted and the night he was betrayed, we will leave in silence as we remember how his disciples abandoned him in the Garden of Gethsemane that evening. On Good Friday, we will gather in silence for subdued worship and then leave in silence all to ponder and reflect upon Jesus' willingness to suffer for us and for our sins which made that suffering necessary. But one week from today, we will gather back here again as a group of believers to burst out in joy and praise. What a wonderful celebration we will have together! It will be a day of celebration as we celebrate Christ's victory over death which he has given to us through faith. We'll bring back the alleluias and sing with joy to our victorious king. That celebration will continue in our lives as we live in the hope and confidence of victory over death and the certainty of life. Seeing Jesus as our Savior go into Jerusalem to fight the spiritual battle to win the victory over sin for us will not leave us disappointed and disillusioned.

We shout out loud today, "Hosanna! Save us now." That's exactly what our king rides into Jerusalem to do. On the cross we see him suffer to save us. In the open tomb we are assured he completed his work and guarantees our salvation. Be realistic about this week and see the love of God on display for you as he rescues you from your sin and guarantees you of eternal life. That's what our king is all about. That's what his kingdom is all about. That's what this week is all about. May God bless your worship this holy week as you see him answer your prayer: "Save us now." Amen