

Blessed is the one who
Comes
in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Just as it was then, *Hosanna* remains our strikingly sharp clarion call-
A piercing cry for political liberation
a strongly expressed **demand** for action,

And, in church, wrapped in the green ribboning of jubilant praise and waving palms, for the one who was and will be, our redeemer: Jesus Christ.

Funnily enough, before there was Jesus— some 160 years before to be exact— there Was a man named Judas Maccabeus. And this Judas was, of course, not the disciple who we know would come to betray Jesus and actively lead him to his death.. BUT instead a Judas who was also known as Judah Maccabee the Priest and *even* “Judah the Hammer,” because he was a ferocious fighter during times of arduous battle.

Some of you might know the story of this Judas. The story of how he led his people— the Jewish people— to victory over a vile and anti-Semitic regime, and against King Antiochus, who commissioned the vandalization of the Jewish temple, sanctioned the genocide of Jews throughout Jerusalem, and Occupied their lands with militant surveillance.

Before the moment of victory over the King and his anti-Semitic regime, Jews in Jerusalem at the time, sorrowfully cried out, “*Hosanna*”, (which means: save us, according to Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic translations) *as* they were being killed and *as* wars ravaged the lands during this plight of Jewish oppression. But when the wars were over and Judas Maccabeus and his soldiers won the battle and purified the temple, crowds of Jews celebrated by waving palm branches. Ironically (or not), it would come to be that the world would experience a similar event 165 years later.

Riding into the holy city of Jerusalem for the *last* time, On a donkey, was Jesus Christ of Nazareth. And as he made his way into the place that would guarantee his death, the crowds gathered around him, lining his path, waving their palms with joy and singing with exuberance, high and joyous praises, of Hosanna, “Save us!” But with glee instead of sorrow because they knew, that Jesus would be the one, who *would* liberate them from the violent and desecrating regime of the Roman government.

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And, although the people believed that once again the Jews would be freed from foreign rule, Jesus knew that, through his death, they would be freed into something far greater: true and perfect freedom, and deliverance from the power of sin and death by way of *the* cross.

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There are of course obvious distinctions between Judas Maccabeus and Jesus Christ. Like, the most important being that Jesus was God enfleshed on earth, meant to die for our salvation... While Judas Maccabeus was not.

But there is one *thing* that remains, in both pursuits of liberation: Hosanna.

The retention of Hosanna from one century to the next, and its transformation from a grieving cry to a cheerful anthem reminds us that the end goal was and will *always* be liberation. However, it also teaches us, that our deliverance is not only *just* possible, but that if we choose to have Jesus on our side we *also* have a stake in our *own* salvation. To be even a bit more provocative, in the words of Pastor Rich Villodas, Hosanna demonstrates to us, "Our own human propensity to control the means of salvation."

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While we shout out Hosanna and wave palms vigorously, placing our cloaks even upon the donkey, that Jesus will sit upon, as he enters Jerusalem— we might not realize how these actions also actively usher in the event, that is the death of Jesus Christ... Because, while Jesus is riding into Jerusalem thinking beyond empire and towards our freedom in God, all while *knowing* that he is the one who is **going** to die, we are *cheering*, for his death.

Of course, we know, that despite being crucified, dying, buried, and descending to the dead, Jesus will rise and live again on Easter Sunday.

But what will come after, between the moment of resurrection and ascension and Jesus' future return to our earth? Because despite being free in Christ, we are held back, by self-chosen or institutional agendas that, might ensure our individual freedom, but certainly underpin the lasting bondage of others. And, until we can recognize how we contribute to the social oppressions of others and how the places, people, and institutions that we pledge allegiance to, promulgate the denial of freedom for others through:

- the unjustifiable deaths of black and brown people

- enduring hierarchies from decades and centuries before
- queerphobia and ableism that shows up in our circles, favorite stores, and workplaces
- And every machination of white supremacy that you can think of,

Jesus will continue to be crucified.

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So I ask you to consider: what will be the reason for your Hosanna? Who is your hosanna meant to free? Will there come a time when, perhaps, Hosanna wouldn't have to be our clarion call?

If hosanna once meant, "*save us*," but with sadness in our hearts, and then became, "Hosanna, *save us*" but with joy permeating our bodies, when will the day come, (and what might the day look like,) when we might not have to proclaim Hosanna at all?

Until then, blessed is the one who

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