

## Sermon for Palm Sunday, March 29, 2026.

### Hosanna / Save Us: The Communal Response to Turmoil (Matthew 21:1–11)

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We are entering into one of the most sacred and emotionally complex weeks of the Christian year. It is a week where joy and sorrow meet...where celebration and grief walk side by side...where praise rises on Sunday... and pain unfolds by Friday.

Today, we gather with palm branches in our hands and songs on our lips: “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!” But we also know something the first crowd did not fully understand—this road leads to a cross. Palm Sunday is not just a celebration. It is an invitation... to enter the tension of Holy Week. And at the center of this moment is not just Jesus, but the **crowd**. Because Matthew tells us: “**The whole city was in turmoil.**” And in that turmoil, two voices emerge: One cries, “**Hosanna!**” Another asks, “**Who is this?**”

#### I. The Turmoil of the Crowd

Let us begin with that word: *turmoil*. It means agitation... disturbance... confusion... emotional unrest. Jerusalem was not calm that day. It was stirred. It was unsettled. People were talking... shouting... wondering... reacting. And isn't that what crowds do? Crowds are powerful—but they are also unpredictable. A crowd can lift you up one moment...and tear you down the next. A crowd can unite around hope...and then fracture in fear. A crowd can shout “Hosanna!” today...and “Crucify Him!” tomorrow. That is the nature of crowd behavior. It is emotional. It is contagious. It is often unexamined. And that is why Palm Sunday invites us to do something very important:

**To discern the voice of the crowd... rather than simply join it.**

## **II. Two Responses in One Crowd**

Now, within this one crowd, Matthew shows us two very different responses.

### **1. The Cry: “Hosanna!”**

There were those who cried out: **“Hosanna to the Son of David!”** These were not random voices. These were people who had seen Jesus...heard Him...walked with Him...Some had witnessed miracles. Some had been healed. Some had been transformed. They remembered the words of the prophet Zechariah: “See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey.” And when they saw Jesus entering the city this way, they recognized something. Not fully. Not perfectly. But truly. And so they cried out: **“Hosanna!”** Now, let us not miss the depth of that word. “Hosanna” is not just praise. It is a plea. It means: **“Save us!”** Save us from oppression. Save us from suffering. Save us from everything that holds us captive. It is the cry of people who know they need help.

### **2. The Question: “Who is this?”**

But then there is another voice rising from the same crowd: **“Who is this?”** Not everyone recognized Him. Not everyone believed. Not everyone understood. For many, Jesus was just another face in the crowd. Another teacher. Another voice. Another outsider. And perhaps there was even a tone of dismissal: “Who is this man from Nazareth?” “This one who does not look like a king?” Because he did not come the way they expected. No royal procession. No war horse. No display of power. Just a man... on a donkey. And so they asked: **“Who is this?”**

## **III. The Danger of Misreading the Moment**

Now here is something we must take seriously: Both groups were part of the same crowd. Which means it is possible to be **physically present**...and yet **spiritually unaware**. It is possible to stand near Jesus...and still not know who He is. It is possible to participate in the celebration...and yet miss the meaning. And that is why crowd behavior must always be discerned. Because the crowd is not always right. The same voices that shout "*Hosanna*" in excitement...can later shout "*Crucify Him*" in disappointment. Why? Because many were not responding out of conviction, but out of expectation. They wanted a political savior. A revolutionary king. A deliverer who would overthrow Rome. But Jesus came with a different kind of kingdom. A kingdom not built on violence—but on love. Not on domination—but on sacrifice. Not on power—but on surrender. And when He did not meet their expectations...their praise turned into rejection.

#### **IV. Why Jerusalem?**

Now let us pause and ask: Why did Jesus enter Jerusalem at all? Why not remain in the quiet towns where He was loved? For three years, He had ministered in places like Capernaum, Nazareth, and Bethsaida—small, familiar, receptive places. But now He comes to Jerusalem. Why? Because Jerusalem was the center. It was the crossroads of culture, religion, and power. If a message was to reach the world, it had to pass through Jerusalem. This was not accidental. This was intentional. Jesus was bringing His mission into the public square. He was stepping into the place where His identity would be questioned, challenged, and ultimately decided upon.

Jerusalem was where truth could no longer remain hidden.

#### **V. The Crowd Then... and the Crowd Now**

Now, let us bring this closer to our own lives. Because the reality is—we are also part of a crowd. We live in a world filled with voices. Voices telling us what to believe...how to think... what to value...And just like in Jerusalem, there are still two responses to Jesus: Some cry, **“Hosanna—save us!”** Others ask, **“Who is this?”** There are many today who are not against Jesus—they simply do not know Him. They have heard His name...but they have not encountered His presence. And so, the question remains alive in our time: **Who is Jesus today?**

## **VI. A Communal Cry for Salvation**

To answer this question, let us return to that word again: **Hosanna—Save us.** This is not just an individual prayer. It is a **communal cry.** The crowd cried it together. And today, our world still needs that cry. We live in a world marked by division... injustice... brokenness... And the truth is—we cannot save ourselves. We need a Savior. History reminds us that when ordinary people come together with courage, transformation can happen. Communities have risen to challenge oppression...to resist injustice...to build something better...But even the best human efforts point us to a deeper need: not just social change—we need spiritual renewal. We need the kind of salvation that only Christ can bring.

## **VII. Answering the Question**

And so we come back to the central question: **“Who is this?”** The crowd asked it then.

The world asks it now. Some say He was a prophet. A teacher.

A good moral example. But that is not enough. When Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do people say that I am?”—they gave similar answers. And then Peter declared:

**“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”** That is the answer. So let me say it clearly today: Who is this? He is the Son of God. He is the Savior of the world. He is the One who

enters in humility...who suffers in love...who dies for our sins...and who rises in victory. He is Lord.

### **VIII. A Personal Invitation**

Now the question is no longer about the crowd. It is about you. It is about me. If Jesus were to enter our lives today—our homes...our communities...What would our response be? Would we cry out: **“Hosanna—Lord, save us!”** Or would we stand at a distance and ask:

**“Who is this?”** Because we cannot remain neutral. Palm Sunday calls for a decision.

### **Conclusion**

So as we begin this Holy Week...Let us not be carried by the confusion of the crowd. Let us not be swept up in temporary emotion. Let us respond with clarity... with conviction...

with faith. Let our voices join—not just in celebration—but in understanding. Let our cry be more than a moment. Let it be a commitment. So today, we say: Hosanna.

Save us, Lord. We know who you are. We welcome you. And we will follow You—from the palms...to the cross...to the empty tomb. **Amen.**