

Churches around the world are celebrating Palm Sunday

Many churches gather palm branches and parade around the block, singing praises to God

We sing songs of praise and glory

It appears that this is a wonderful celebration of Jesus

Yet within a week he will have been crucified—all is not going as well as it seems

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of the colt

he was acting out the apocalyptic vision found in Zechariah 9:9-17

This is a song of the victory of the Lord—God's victory over the oppressors

with a promise to release the oppressed

The gospel writer refers to this vision when he says...

*Say to Daughter Zion, "Look, your king is coming to you,*

*humble and riding on a donkey, and on a colt the donkey's offspring."* Matthew 21:5

Jesus' reenactment of Zechariah's vision was accompanied by the triumph song—Psalm 118

*"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!*

*Hosanna in the highest heaven!"* Matthew 21:9

They are quoting from Psalm 118:25-26

*Save us, we beseech you, O LORD! O LORD, we beseech you, give us success!*

*Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD. We bless you from the house of the LORD. Psalms 118:25-26 NRSV*

We "hear" Hosanna as praise to God

Traditionally it meant "save us"

Originally it was a cry for help—save us!

God save King Jesus! Save us now King Jesus!

Psalm 118 is a mighty hymn to Yahweh's surprising victory

when the people of God were surrounded by their enemy

Psalm 118 is a praise hymn, thanking God for his salvation

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is a reenactment of this victory—God's victory

It is a reenactment of the ancient Jewish ritual of the king entering in power and victory

The messiah has arrived and is declared king

He is recognized as king by a crowd of his disciples and followers

Not by those with power or authority

When the Pharisees asked Jesus to make it stop, he said...

*"I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out"* Luke 19:40

It is like the marches swarming the cities across the US yesterday

Youth and the common person saying no to violence

When the elected congress won't act, the people rise up and speak

And they refuse to be silent and go away

The women's march a year ago was marked by peace and even joy

Yet it was a serious cry for justice

To cry "Hosanna!" is to cry to God for justice and mercy

Just as we cry for justice and mercy in 2018—in our world, country, and locally

Justice for school children who fear a shooting in their school

Justice for the poor, the prisoner, the homeless, the immigrant, the oppressed

To celebrate Palm Sunday is to declare that Jesus is King—of the Kingdom of God

To say that we are citizens of the Kingdom of God and follow Jesus as we cry Hosanna!