

Text: Matthew 21

Theme: Hosanna

Sermon delivered by Revd Canon Dele Agbelusi during Palm Sunday Service

Our English word "hosanna" comes from a Greek word "hosanna" which comes from a Hebrew phrase *hoshiya na*.

And that Hebrew phrase is found in only one place in the entire Old Testament, Psalm 118:25, where it means, "Save, please!" It is a cry to God for help. Like when somebody pushes you off the diving board before you can swim and you come up hollering: "Help, save me" ... "*Hoshiya na!*"

But something happened to that phrase, *hoshiya na*. The meaning changed over the years. In the Psalm it was immediately followed by the exclamation: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" The cry for help, *hoshiya na*, was answered almost before it came out of the Psalmist's mouth. And over the centuries the phrase *hoshiya na* stopped being a cry for help in the ordinary language of the Jews. Instead it became a shout of hope and celebration. It used to mean, "Save, please!" But gradually it came to mean, "Salvation! Salvation! Salvation has come!" It used to be what you would say when you fell off the diving board. But it came to be what you would say when you see the lifeguard coming to save you! It is the bubbling over of a heart that sees hope and joy and salvation on the way and can't keep it in.

We stand in tension today. Every year we take the route that is heralded with the shout: "Hosanna to the Son of David" on His triumphal entry on Palm Sunday to "He is Risen" on Easter Morn but having to pass through dark Gethsemane and Calvary.

"The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them." They found the colt and brought it to Jesus. Oh if this could be said of us today. What is it you have read in the word or heard preached or taught about our Lord Jesus that you have been called to do that you are not doing. When JESUS speaks to his own people the RESPONSE should be OBEDIENCE!

The disciples placed their cloaks on the back of the donkey. The crowd followed suit by spreading their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

Do you see the devotion! Do you feel the honour placed upon this man? Do you feel the reverence?

Have you ever shouted for Jesus, just to praise His Name!? The crowd Shouted: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!"

I wish I were able to tell you: "They lived happily ever after"; but I can't. A few days after Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a colt, is His shameful exit from Jerusalem on a cross. The question we must ask ourselves is: "What happened?". How did the crowd go from shouting "Hosanna!" one day to "Crucify Him!" a few days later?

The officials were not happy at the popularity of Jesus. The crowd too were expecting that at this time, Jesus was going to give the command to his followers and with the Messiah status, Son of David, the Romans were up for a hard time. On the part of the officials they wanted Jesus dead.

So come Thursday night, "The Chief Priest and the Elders persuaded the people". I wonder who or what might be persuading you to turn your back on Jesus - not to give your best to Him.

Who might have been persuading the Chief priest and the elders to have Jesus killed?
Where was the “amen corner” now? Where were the shouts of “Hosanna”?

These people were welcoming their King, the One who had salvation for them. Only later would they realize what it really meant that Jesus was their Passover Lamb. They could not understand the price He would pay for their salvation. As they cried out, “Hosanna,” they did not know that He would give up His own life so they could be saved from the bondage of sin.

Again, Hosanna had become more of a celebration than a cry for help. However, help was on the way, and it would come by the death of the very King they were hoping would lead them to victory against the Romans.

Conclusion: As we close today, please know that Jesus didn't come just to make your life better. He came to give you life- His life, real life. As we face the pain and difficulty of this life, we are often brought to a place where we cry out, “Hosanna! Help, Lord! Save me from my problems.” And God often does help us, just as Jesus helped and healed all who came to Him. But until we cry out, “Hosanna! Save me from my sins,” we haven't really dealt with our problem. When we do that and experience God's grace and forgiveness, then our Hosanna becomes a true celebration. It becomes praise because the Lamb of God has taken away our sin and given us a new heart and a new beginning.

Where are you today? Hosanna... problems? Hosanna... sins? Hosanna... praise You, Lord for delivering me and helping me? Where do you want to be? Where do you need to be? What will your Hosanna be today?