

## *To God Alone Be The Glory*

Did you hear about the air passenger whose flight was cancelled? His patience was gone, so he shoved his way to the head of the re-ticketing line and angrily demanded a first-class ticket on the next available flight. The airline agent calmly explained that he'd be happy to help, but the man would have to wait in line like everybody else. Well, that was more than the traveler could stand, so he said, "Do you have any idea who I am?" The airline agent calmly picked up the microphone and said, "Your attention please. There's a gentleman at the ticket counter who doesn't know who he is. If anyone can identify him, please come to the ticket counter."

Now, the passenger obviously knew who he was, but he sure wasn't behaving like he should. When you know who you are and what your purpose in life is, you don't have to act like a big shot or demand recognition and special treatment. Jesus knows who he is. His behavior on Palm Sunday conforms well to his stated purpose: to give his life as a ransom for many. The fact that Jesus knows who he is leads us to delve deeper into today's Gospel. And while we're delving, we'll discover FIVE REASONS TO SHOUT: *HOSANNA to the Son of David*. If you have something to write with, see if you can write down all five reasons in the space on p. 6 of your service folder.

1. (28-35). Don't you find it astounding that Jesus knows exactly where a donkey will be in the nearby village? He tells his disciples <sup>30</sup> "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."

Jesus sure knows a lot of details. He even puts words in the mouths of his disciples in case the owners of the young donkey object to its being taken by strangers: <sup>31</sup> "If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.'" I can think of two explanations for this: either Jesus made arrangements with the owners ahead of time, or Jesus knows things that ordinary people can't know. Since there are several other Bible passages in which Jesus knows things only God can know, such as the thoughts of people, it's likely that Jesus is letting some of his God-ness show here in this Palm Sunday account.

This may help explain why the donkey owners are willing send their animal with complete strangers (Mark 11:6). As true God Jesus is powerful. Just a few weeks ago he raised Lazarus from the dead here in Bethany. It would be easy for Jesus to will that the owners' will conform to his will.

And another thing: after church I think we ought to get in our vehicles and drive to a farm with donkeys. Let's locate a young donkey that's never been ridden

before and put a total stranger on its back. What do you think the donkey is going to do? Buck and kick until he unseats his rider! But here Jesus, a total stranger, gets on a strong young donkey that's never been ridden before, and he rides it through a bunch of people who are probably jumping around and crowding the donkey as they throw cloaks and palm branches down in front of it—and the donkey neither bucks nor kicks nor unseats its rider. Why? Could it be that the donkey recognizes Jesus as God himself, its Creator? \*On Palm Sunday **Jesus showed he is true God.** That's one good reason to shout: HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID.

2. Jesus knows who he is. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. But Jesus also knows his purpose in life. So he rides a donkey (35). Doesn't it seem odd that Jesus would walk 90 miles from Galilee to Bethany and then secure a donkey for the final two miles to Jerusalem? If you're going to borrow a donkey, shouldn't you rent one with unlimited mileage? Jesus, of course, isn't riding a donkey because his feet are tired. He knows the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9-10 in which God reveals that the Messiah will ride a donkey. Now if Jesus wants to show his worthiness as leader, he could ride a horse into Jerusalem: a horse is so much nicer a mount for a king. Or if he wants to show his strength, he could say, "Let there be an A-1 Abrams tank" and ride

that into Jerusalem as a conquering hero. But the Messiah was prophesied to be gentle and humble, so he rides a donkey. Jesus can also call on 72,000 angels—each one more powerful than any tank—but the angels remain hidden on this first Palm Sunday because Jesus is not coming into Jerusalem for political purposes or earthly power. Riding **the donkey shows** that he knows he is not an earthly king. **Jesus is the humble Messiah.** That's another good reason to shout: HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID.

3. (36-38a) <sup>36</sup>*As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.* What's the deal with the cloaks? **The people are acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah-King**, first of all with their cloaks. Now, you have to understand: to the average person in Jerusalem, his cloak (outer garment) is one of his most costly possessions. When a commoner needs to borrow money, he puts up his cloak as collateral—it's about all he has that's valuable. ¿And now these people are putting their cloaks down on the ground for Jesus' donkey to walk on? Have you ever been to a parade and seen what comes out of the south end of a north-bound horse? Donkeys have the same manufacturing process inside them as horses. The people in Jesus' day know about such things. So why do they put their cloaks on the ground? Because they want to show their great respect for Jesus, as in: "Jesus, you are so important

to us that we don't want you or your donkey to have to walk on the same ground we commoners walk on."

By the way, this practice isn't new. Throwing cloaks on the ground is an old, old custom. In 2 Kings 9:13 when Jehu was anointed king of Israel, about 800 years ago, the people took their cloaks off and spread them under his feet. So this is a culturally clear way for the people to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah, their King. And in the original Greek words, it says they keep on doing it. In other words, after Jesus' donkey walks over their cloak, they pick it up, run ahead and put it down on the ground again.

<sup>37</sup>*When [Jesus] 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:*  
<sup>38</sup>*"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"* The whole crowd of disciples—all twelve of them! No, no, no. Twelve disciples do not make a crowd. So what about this crowd? We know the annual Passover festival is only four days away. So lots of pilgrims are in Jerusalem right now, people from all over the country where Jesus has done his miracles, including his latest, that of raising Lazarus from the dead. This, by the way, might explain why the people on Palm Sunday are praising Jesus as the Messiah, and on Friday morning, just

five days from now, the people will cry out for Jesus to be crucified: it may be two different groups of people.

What I want to know is, why are the people shouting "*Hosanna to the Son of David*"? "Son of David" is a title reserved for the Messiah. And "hosanna" is a praise word reserved for God alone. We can draw the conclusion that **the people are acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah-King** by their words. But how do they know? Have they learned the Zechariah 9:9-10 prophecy? Even if they haven't, Jesus has done so many miracles that it is an easy, faith-driven conclusion for them to draw. They feel a joyful compulsion to praise God for sending the long-promised Messiah-King using praise words from Psalm 118. Their faith-filled reactions are enough to make us modern-day Christians ask ourselves, "Have I gotten too wrapped up in the things of this world so that I'm not taking enough time to praise and thank God for all his goodness to me?" Well, Holy Week is a great time to work on changing this: we get to attend worship five times in eight days! We get to acknowledge Jesus as our Messiah-King. And that's a third reason to shout: HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID.

4. (38b) Just think. Not weapons of war but palm branches (which Luke doesn't mention) mark Jesus' entrance into the Jewish capital. [facetiously] "Look out,

you chief priests; Jesus is threatening your earthly power base! Those palm branches are mighty dangerous weapons!” Yeah, right! Jesus’ many miracles prove that he has divine power, and yet he uses none of this power to establish an earthly kingdom. So what’s he doing here? The people know. That’s why they are shouting: “*Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!*” Where have you heard words like this before? Yes, someone just thought it: from the Christmas story. “*Glory to God in the highest and peace to those on whom his favor rests*” (Luke 2:14). See, the people understand that Jesus’ humble ride into Jerusalem means there is “*peace in heaven*” and “*glory in the highest [places]*.” “Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.”

**Jesus brings peace for us in heaven.**

That’s our fourth reason to shout:  
**HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID.**

5. But those pesky Pharisees, ever present, are on hand to criticize. <sup>39</sup>*Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples! Don’t you realize that you are letting them blaspheme God when they refer to you as the Messiah? You’re not the Messiah, Jesus.”* Oh? “Your attention please. There’s a group of Pharisees at the ticket counter who don’t know who Jesus is. If anyone can identify Jesus, please come to the ticket counter.”

<sup>40</sup>“*I tell you,*” [Jesus] *replied, “if [these people] keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”* What do you suppose Jesus means? I always thought Jesus meant: a) “If these people keep quiet, the actual rocks and stones on the ground will cry out their praises, because this is a day for these words to be shouted, HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID. Someone has to shout them. If the people are quiet, the stones will have to shout.” But there are two other legitimate ways to understand Jesus’ words, and both point ahead to the future. b) “If these people who have seen my miracles keep quiet when they should be praising God for bringing about the forgiveness of sins, then God will go to the people whom you Pharisees think of as ‘stones,’ such as the Gentiles. Those people will cry out my praises if Jerusalem won’t. Don’t throw away your opportunity, O Pharisees.” c) And the third way you can legitimately interpret Jesus’ words: “If these people who have seen my miracles keep quiet when they should be praising God for bringing about the forgiveness of sins, then in 40 years God will bring the Romans against Jerusalem and they will not leave one stone on top of another, and the scattered stones will cry out that God has judged you for refusing to listen to the Messiah.” No matter which way you take Jesus’ words, the point is, **If we don’t praise him, someone else will** (39-40). That’s our fifth reason to shout,  
**HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID.**