

**Mark 11:1-10 + Hosanna to the Coming King! + Series: Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel
Cross of Christ Ev. Lutheran Church – Liverpool, NY
1st Sunday of Advent + 3 December 2017**

If there's any time of year that could be described as a "musical" time of year, it's this time of year, right? Already before Thanksgiving, radio stations started switching their formats over to Christmas music 24/7 or at least heavily sprinkled among the top 40 hits. You go out shopping and you hear holiday tunes playing in the background. Sometimes they're subtle and sometimes they blare. Retailers know that with stores decorated for winter and holiday festivities, the subtle addition of Christmas music can actually lead customers to purchase more items in their store than if it was ordinary elevator or pop music. Schools and musical groups are hosting concerts. We're even getting ready here for special worship services full of music this Christmas.

During this musical time of year, you hear all kinds of songs from silly songs about jingly bells, snowmen, reindeer, and jolly elves to emotional songs that tug on your heart strings about white Christmases, warm family gatherings, and shoes. Yet even among all those secular songs, you hear familiar Christmas carols like Joy to the World, Silent Night, Oh Holy Night, and Hark the Herald Angels Sing. You don't expect to hear Stars and Stripes Forever or I Know that My Redeemer Lives or Take Me Out to the Ballgame.

So why do we hear this song today: ***"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"***? Why do we hear the unexpected plea, "Save us, please!"? What's even more unusual is that we hear that song not from the lips of people crying out in danger, but from men, women, and children shouting at the top of their lungs, singing the praises of an unusual King entering the ancient city of Jerusalem. This is a song we usually hear in the springtime right before Easter. Why hear this song today at the start of Advent when we expect to hear Christmas songs along with the rest of the world?

This unusual song has everything to do with the unusual King, who enters Jerusalem triumphantly on the back of a donkey. He comes not to take a throne, but to make a painful journey to a criminal's cross. Yet this same King will come again by rending the heavens apart to bring judgment on the world. Sacrifice and judgment don't sound Christmasy at all, but the song we hear is most Advent appropriate: **HOSANNA TO THE COMING KING!**

Jesus knew the end of his journey was near. The time had come to enter ancient Jerusalem and finish what he had come to do in the first place—conquer mankind's greatest enemies by his own death on a cross. To make that entrance, however, Jesus sent two disciples to carry out a special task. ***"Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'"*** Jesus had walked the entire distance with his disciples—about 70 miles down from Galilee to Jericho and another 20 along steep, rocky roads from Jericho into Israel's central highlands to the top of the Mount of Olives. Jerusalem was in sight. Why get a ride now? Jesus was the coming King foretold by prophets.

The prophet Zechariah (9:9) had foretold, ***"Rejoice greatly, O Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."*** If Jesus was an unusual king coming to save humanity in an unusual way, even his entrance into Jerusalem was to be unusual. A donkey—a beast of burden, not a war horse—would be the King's ride.

The Savior's divine nature is even more evident when you realize he was going to ride a never-ridden colt through shouting, singing, joy-filled crowds with no problem at all! Surely even the beast realized this King was God himself. ***"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"***

As the all-knowing God, Jesus knew exactly where the disciples would find the colt tied up, knew exactly what question the disciples would have to answer, and knew exactly what answer would satisfy the questioner. Jesus told his disciples to give a royal answer, ***"The Lord needs it..."*** The ***"Lord"*** was requisitioning that colt for his one-time, special use...and the disciples saw everything play out exactly as Jesus had said. ***"They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, some people standing there asked, 'What are you doing, untying that colt?' They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go."***

All of this was just another reason why great songs of praise would be sung to this unusual King making his "advent" or entrance into Jerusalem. Yes, Jesus guided all events, but what's even more amazing is that he willingly went through with it. You see, Jesus knew what was awaited him in Jerusalem. He knew he would be

praised as king, but he also knew those same crowds would turn on him. He wouldn't be the glorious, earthly king they expected, but more like the Passover lamb they were going to slaughter on Friday night. Jesus appeared to be going to war unprepared. No army stood behind him. No war horse marched beneath him. His only weapon was **"the name of the Lord,"** but still he came to conquer.

Jesus knew exactly what he was about to endure. His own disciples would abandon him. His Father would forsake him. He would die like a criminal. Yet Jesus still willingly laid aside his glory and power to become a slave for us. He willingly took our crushing sins, our deserved punishment, and our death on his own shoulders to give us forgiveness. **Hosanna to the coming King! "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"**

There's something else that's striking in our text. It's not just Jesus' display of power over all things or his willingness to go to the cross, but also the simple trust of his disciples. When he sent two of his disciples to go and get the colt, they don't ask a single question. They don't object to what Jesus has to say. They carry out his command without hesitation. They simply do what Jesus sent them to do. They had already seen Jesus do far greater things than predict the future. Therefore, they trusted what Jesus had to say.

Are we always like that? Do we always take Jesus at his word? When he makes a promise to be with us to the end of time, are we always confident of his loving presence? When he promises to hear and answer our prayers, even to open the floodgates of heaven, are we always willing to let go of our dependence on ourselves and trust in him? When he declares that the payment for our sins is paid, are we always quick to let go of our guilt? Sadly, we're not always as trusting as those disciples, but yet we're still like them.

You see, later that week, they failed to trust Jesus too. In his hour of need, Jesus' disciples betrayed or abandoned him or publicly denied knowing him. Yet Jesus still came to save both them and us. He came to be there for us even when we've forsaken him. He came to fulfill his promises with a perfect life and even death on a cross, because we can't. He came to defeat our sin, our guilt, and our death, so we can simply trust what he tells us in his Word. He came to save us. **Hosanna to the coming King!**

Jesus' followers also showed their trust in him by the way they welcomed him. Many were poor with literally nothing except the cloaks on their backs. Yet when Jesus needed a saddle, they gave up their cloaks to make a saddle for him. Others spread their cloaks out on the ground so no dust would touch the King's feet, ignoring what the colt might leave behind. They ran out and cut down palm branches—ancient symbols of victory—to place in the roadway and to wave in honor of the coming King. They sang that ancient Advent song. **"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"**

The urgent cry of "Save us, please!" became a jubilant song of praise. Those ancient songs came from psalms that spoke of the Messiah's final victory, not with strength of arms and armies, but with the gracious power of God. By singing those words to Jesus, his followers acknowledged that Jesus was the One for whom believers had longed for centuries. The plea of the endangered became the praise of the rescued to their Advent King.

By faith, we welcome that same unusual King of kings. He deserves our obedience, our preparation, our hope, because he came to save us. He suffered, so you would not. He died, so you would live. He conquered, so you would be free. Now in grateful response to your Savior King, Advent melodies of praise fill your life and mine. Those Advent melodies to your coming King weave through the loving words you use to build up your spouse or child or sibling or classmate or co-worker. Those Advent melodies break forth when you give top priority to the worship of your coming King and the study of his Word. Those Advent melodies burst forth each new day when you wake up remembering that sin no longer has control over you and death will not destroy you, because Jesus came to win the eternal victory for you. Those Advent melodies fill your worship life as Jesus comes to you through words, through water, and through bread and wine to bless you richly.

Yet this same King is still on his way. He no longer rides on borrowed coats on the back of a donkey carrying him to suffering and death. Instead, on the Last Day he will **"rend the heavens and come down."** (Isaiah 64:1) Jesus will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, to send every unbeliever to eternal condemnation in hell, and to bring every believer body and soul to be with him in heaven forever. And our hearts and voices fill with eternal songs of praise—not Christmas jingles, but Advent songs of salvation.

Like so many believers before us, we watch and wait for his coming—even during this busy, musical time of year. We prepare for the return of the King even as we prepare for the celebration of Christmas with all its events and activities. We praise the coming King who will finish what he has begun. Hosanna to the coming King! **"Hosanna in the highest!"** Amen.