

Building on Biblical Foundations

John 12

“Hosanna in the Highest”

Karin Paparelli Peters

I can spend an entire Sunday morning on one verse – as you know. But today I am going to address the entire chapter, so we may read the Lord’s words in context. Context is so important. You can walk in on a conversation hear one line and think you know what is happening, but you really have very little idea of the entire exchange and its full meaning.

As we prepare to enter this most holy of weeks, there are several themes running through my mind:

- the celebration of anticipation the Jews felt when Jesus arrived in Jerusalem,
- the error of their thinking,
- the Lord’s concern for the people,
- the last supper shared together,
- the agony of suffering that was to yet to come,
- Christ crucified
- the darkness and despair that enveloped the followers of Jesus
- giving way to the incredible reality of Jesus’ resurrection.

We lifted palm branches to the Lord – the King of Kings – as we came in this morning as a demonstration of our devotion and worship. Just as they did in Jerusalem more than 2000 years ago. Let’s begin in John 12:1 as Jesus sets the scene for us.

JOHN Chapter 12 From the Message:

12¹⁻³ Six days before Passover, Jesus entered Bethany where Lazarus, so recently raised from the dead, was living. Lazarus and his sisters invited Jesus to dinner at their home. Martha served. Lazarus was one of those sitting at the table with them. Mary came in with a jar of very expensive

aromatic oils, anointed and massaged Jesus' feet, and then wiped them with her hair. The fragrance of the oils filled the house.

⁴⁻⁶ Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, even then getting ready to betray him, said, "Why wasn't this oil sold and the money given to the poor? It would have easily brought three hundred silver pieces." He said this not because he cared two cents about the poor but because he was a thief. He was in charge of their common funds, but also embezzled them.

⁷⁻⁸ Jesus said, "Let her alone. She's anticipating and honoring the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you. You don't always have me."

⁹⁻¹¹ Word got out among the Jews that he was back in town. The people came to take a look, not only at Jesus but also at Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead. So the high priests plotted to kill Lazarus because so many of the Jews were going over and believing in Jesus on account of him.

¹²⁻¹⁵ The next day the huge crowd that had arrived for the Feast heard that Jesus was entering Jerusalem. They broke off palm branches and went out to meet him. And they cheered:

Hosanna!

Blessed is he who comes in God's name!

Yes! The King of Israel!

Jesus got a young donkey and rode it, just as the Scripture has it:

No fear, Daughter Zion:

**See how your king comes,
riding a donkey's colt.**

¹⁶ The disciples didn't notice the fulfillment of many Scriptures at the time, but after Jesus was glorified, they remembered that what was written about him matched what was done to him.

¹⁷⁻¹⁹ The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb, raising him from the dead, was there giving eyewitness accounts.

It was because they had spread the word of this latest God-sign that the crowd swelled to a welcoming parade. The Pharisees took one look and threw up their hands: “It’s out of control. The world’s in a stampede after him.”

²⁰⁻²¹ There were some Greeks in town who had come up to worship at the Feast. They approached Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee: “Sir, we want to see Jesus. Can you help us?”

²²⁻²³ Philip went and told Andrew. Andrew and Philip together told Jesus. Jesus answered, “Time’s up. The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

²⁴⁻²⁵ “Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over. In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you’ll have it forever, real and eternal.

²⁶ “If any of you wants to serve me, then follow me. Then you’ll be where I am, ready to serve at a moment’s notice. The Father will honor and reward anyone who serves me.

²⁷⁻²⁸ “Right now I am shaken. And what am I going to say? ‘Father, get me out of this’? No, this is why I came in the first place. I’ll say, ‘Father, put your glory on display.’”

A voice came out of the sky: “I have glorified it, and I’ll glorify it again.”

²⁹ The listening crowd said, “Thunder!”

Others said, “An angel spoke to him!”

³⁰⁻³³ Jesus said, “The voice didn’t come for me but for you. At this moment the world is in crisis. Now Satan, the ruler of this world, will be thrown out. And I, as I am lifted up from the earth, will attract everyone to me and gather them around me.” He put it this way to show how he was going to be put to death.

³⁴Voices from the crowd answered, “We heard from God’s Law that the Messiah lasts forever. How can it be necessary, as you put it, that the Son of Man ‘be lifted up’? Who is this ‘Son of Man’?”

³⁵⁻³⁶Jesus said, “For a brief time still, the light is among you. Walk by the light you have so darkness doesn’t destroy you. If you walk in darkness, you don’t know where you’re going. As you have the light, believe in the light. Then the light will be within you, and shining through your lives. You’ll be children of light.”

³⁶⁻⁴⁰Jesus said all this, and then went into hiding. All these God-signs he had given them and they still didn’t get it, still wouldn’t trust him. This proved that the prophet Isaiah was right:

God, who believed what we preached?

Who recognized God’s arm, outstretched and ready to act?

First they wouldn’t believe, then they *couldn’t*—again, just as Isaiah said:

**Their eyes are blinded,
 their hearts are hardened,
So that they wouldn’t see with their eyes
 and perceive with their hearts,
And turn to me, God,
 so I could heal them.**

⁴¹Isaiah said these things after he got a glimpse of God’s overflowing glory that would pour through the Messiah.

⁴²⁻⁴³On the other hand, a considerable number from the ranks of the leaders did believe. But because of the Pharisees, they didn’t come out in the open with it. They were afraid of getting kicked out of the meeting place. When push came to shove they cared more for human approval than for God’s glory.

⁴⁴⁻⁴⁶Jesus summed it all up when he cried out, “Whoever believes in me, believes not just in me but in the One who sent me. Whoever looks at me is looking, in fact, at the One who sent me. I am Light that has come into the world so that all who believe in me won’t have to stay any longer in the dark.

⁴⁷⁻⁵⁰ **“If anyone hears what I am saying and doesn’t take it seriously, I don’t reject him. I didn’t come to reject the world; I came to save the world. But you need to know that whoever puts me off, refusing to take in what I’m saying, is willfully choosing rejection.**

The Word, the Word-made-flesh that I have spoken and that I am, *that* Word and no other is the last word. I’m not making any of this up on my own. The Father who sent me gave me orders, told me what to say and how to say it. And I know exactly what his command produces: real and eternal life. That’s all I have to say. What the Father told me, I tell you.”

There are a few things I want to highlight in this chapter all in relation to the preparation of Jesus for his finished work on the cross:

1. Foreshadow of Lazarus rising from the dead John 12:
2. Anointing of Jesus with precious spikenard John 12:
3. Hosanna – shouted from the crowds upon his entrance into Jerusalem
4. Unless a kernel of wheat dies and is planted . . .
5. He Who Has Ears To Hear
6. Judged by the Word spoken to you

1. The Foreshadow of Resurrection:

We begin the chapter with an account of Jesus dining at the home of with his friends – siblings Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Lazarus had recently died from sickness and Jesus restored him to health. In the previous chapter, Lazarus has been in the tomb 4 days when Jesus arrives – and yet Jesus calls him forth from the grave and Lazarus obeys and comes out from the tomb. This account traveled all through the region and created quite a buzz. But it also served as a shadow of what was to come. The Lord of resurrection had been revealed.

2. Anointing of Jesus:

In the old testament priests and kings were anointed.

The Anointing of the Head:

- In Exodus 29:7 Moses anoints Aaron the high priest by pouring the holy oil upon his head.
- 1 Samuel 16:13 King David was anointed by Samuel by pouring the holy oil over his head.

The washing of feet explained in the Old Testament:

- Exodus 30:20 When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD:

It is here that Mary anoints the Lord. Matthew and Mark's account says that Mary pours the perfume over Jesus head, John's account says she poured it over his feet. It is probably correct to believe she did both. The perfume was spikenard and was valued at a year's salary in those days.

It was imported from the east and sealed inside an alabaster box that had to be broken to release the perfume. There is so much imagery and symbolism in this account.

1. To anoint the head = high priest anointing, Kingly anointing
2. To wash the priest's feet was an act performed to wash away the defilement of the world, to sanctify and cleanse the priest before he could come near the altar and enter the Holy Place

In the case of Jesus, they did both – to prepare him for the Cross

1. He was set apart as high priest over all humanity, our interceder before the Father in heaven and exalted as King over the universe.
2. His feet were cleansed with expensive perfume to wash away the defilement of the entire world, to prepare him to enter the holiest of places

3. Hosana

After this act – the next day – as Jesus is coming into Jerusalem, the crowd sets out to meet him. They break Palm branches and cheer: shouting Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

What is Hosanna? We see it here in Psalm 118 – this is an interesting passage of scripture:

Psalm 118: 19 – 26 “Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD: ²⁰This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. ²¹I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone *which* the builders refused is become the head *stone* of the corner. ²³This is the LORD'S doing; it *is* marvellous

in our eyes. ²⁴This is the day *which* the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

²⁵Save now (*Hosanna*), I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. ²⁶Blessed *be* he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.

The Hebrew word, “hoshi’a na,” is translated in Greek as “(h)osanna.” In English, we know it as “hosanna.”

The original intent of the scripture is “Save!” It is viewed as a plea for help.

The first use of Hosanna in Psalm 118 meant: “Please, save us!”

There is a shift here in John’s gospel though – now they are shouting “Thank you for saving us!”

It was a shift from pleading to thanking, from hoping to receiving. The people were acknowledging the coming King, the long-awaited Messiah.

But let’s look at why. . .

John 12: 17-18 The people gathered around because of the miracle of Lazarus. They worshipped Jesus because of the works he was doing. They were caught up in the excitement of it all. In a few days their tone would change. They would become a mob set on violence. Their adoration quickly vanished and was replaced by anger, rage and hostility. Why?

They weren’t really following him to being with. They were only caught up in the moment. Like a crowd of people at a concert or parade. They shout and cheer with a mob mentality. The same crowd that crushes someone underfoot as a mob races toward a door in fear and panic. Keep this in mind. Do we follow Jesus because of those cheering around us, or are we willing to follow him into the darkness too?

Remember the story of what unfolds later that same week . . . as Jesus is taken into custody all abandon him. Even Peter denies him. They scatter and hide. When he is crucified, who stays by his side? His mother Mary, John and Mary Magdalene. What happened to the rest?

4. Unless I Die:

Jesus warned them what was coming. But who heard him? Who would want to hear such things?

In verses 23-32 Jesus plainly tells the people he must die in order to glorify the Father and accomplish his mission.

He shares a kingdom principle that has never failed: **the power of the seed**. When a seed is planted in the ground it produces a crop after its kind. He was demonstrating the power of sacrifice, of trust, of reproducing after your kind.

This – death to self – is what he was calling us to. To die as he died, that we might actually love.

Verse 25: If any man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall my servant be also, If you serve me, my father will honor you.

5. He Who Has Ears to Hear:

Verse 28 Jesus says Father, glorify they name. And a voice from heaven responds.

Some hear thunder, some hear angels. We are reminded once again: Let those who have ears hear. The question today is “Do you hear heaven?: ARE YOU LISTENING? If the answer is no, I encourage you to press into prayer until you do.

Whatever is coming upon the earth shortly will change everything. What will you do if you cannot hear from heaven? How will you know what to do? Who to follow? If it was just you and no one else how would you know?

6. Judged by the Word spoken to you

In Verse 31: Jesus speaks of Judgement. In times past, God’s judgment has been accompanied by solar eclipses. We don’t have time this morning to dig into this teaching but we will.

On the cross – as judgment – the judgment that was intended for man, fell upon Jesus. A solar eclipse occurred.

In his body, Jesus bore the judgment of the entire world, all sins from all people for eternity.

He was our sacrificial lamb, our scapegoat. He bore our sins, and suffered our punishment. The judgement of God was upon him. To accomplish a purpose – one time for all humanity.

What do we do with this?

Verses 44-50 Jesus leaves us with hope and a warning:

When we believe in Jesus, we also believe in the Father

When we see Jesus, we see the Father

Jesus came as a light into the world – he who believes in him shall not abide in darkness

YET this is a choice:

If anyone hears his words and does not believe – that one is not judged by Jesus – he is judged by the WORD that Jesus spoke. Judged by the WORDS he did not receive.

And those same words shall judge him in the last day – at the end of the ages, the end of time, the end of his life.

Words matter. The Words of God are words of life to those who hear them and put them into practice, and yet Jesus says these same words shall also bring of judgment and death to those who refuse to hear.

Jesus never spoke of his own accord – but what the Father gave him to speak. In obedience he spoke. In obedience he went to the cross. In obedience he stayed on that cross and submitted himself to the plan of God.

What are you willing to do in obedience to your God? Will you speak as he speaks? His word is still the Word that judges the earth. It is not you nor I that judge the world around us, it is the WORD of God that judges the earth and its inhabitants.

We all stand in jeopardy of eternal damnation for the WORD that was spoken. But The Lord did not abandon us to judgement, but sent the sacrificial lamb to

bear our judgment. Now all we must do is trust in the finished work of the cross – the Hosanna – of Jesus. The savior of the world.

As we approach the Passover Seder this Thursday – where we will re-enact the Last supper of our Lord and contemplate his betrayal, suffering and death – and his fulfilment of all that was promised – let's truly remember what Jesus did.

It was a choice. His choice. He could have chosen differently and we would be forever lost. But for our sake, for the love of the Father and the love of all humanity, he endured – He was the only one qualified.

He overcame what only HE COULD and secured for us a gift none deserve. The Grace of God. Amazing grace! We have been given a gift that no one could purchase – ever.

When we meet again next Sunday we will rejoice together in our risen Lord. Death could not hold him. The grave could not hold him. Satan could not defeat him. He deserves all our worship.

We will meet on Sunday at sunrise (6:37AM) – break of day – to sing our praises to the one who broke every curse, every chain. We will linger over breakfast and come back at 9:45 AM to raise our voices again in celebration – and our service will be worship filled. Come expecting to sing, to rejoice, to celebrate our risen King.

Jesus said the Kingdom of God is at hand, and indeed it is.