

Palm Sunday, 2009  
Good Hope Lutheran Church

Grace mercy and peace be multiplied among you all in the knowledge of God, and of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The big Bible word we use every year on Palm Sunday, is Hosanna. Hosanna! Hosanna, they shouted, as Jesus made His way into Jerusalem, surrounded by the adoring crowds. Hosanna, we sing and say, as we remember the day and get ready for the week to come, Hosanna! It sounds like such a happy word, you know? Something you yell when your team wins the championship game, or you get a nice fat promotion at work, or your kid gets all A's on his report card—you know, Hosanna! Yippee! Hurrah for our side, we won this time, yes! The opening hymn today kind of gives this same impression, doesn't it?—you might remember the words, “All glory laud and honor to you redeemer King. To whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring,”*sweet*, hosannas. Yelling hosanna, having someone yell it at you, is *sweet*, it's terrific, it's wonderful. It's the kind of *sweet* moment, we just can't get enough of.

Really? Really, is that what it is? Does anybody happen to remember what the word hosanna actually means?

Hebrew is one of those funny languages, one word in Hebrew can be a whole sentence in English. It's a different kind of language, that's all I'm going to say, one word in Hebrew—a whole sentence in English. And what the Hebrew word hosanna means in English is this: “Save us Lord, we beseech you. Save us Lord, we're begging! Save us Lord. Please.”

That doesn't sound sweet to me. That doesn't sound like the cry of victory I'd always thought hosanna was, that sounds way too scared, and way too desperate. Hosanna is a prayer, a one word prayer, and it's the kind of prayer you pray, when you've tried everything else and have finally come to the realization that in your life it is God or it is nothing. “Save me Lord, I'm begging you.” Hosanna is the kind of prayer you pray, when you've tried pinning your hopes on everything else—the stock market, political platforms, consumerism, good old fashioned

spending on self, whatever—you've pinned your hopes on everything else, and none of it works! It all lets you down! "Save us Lord, please," because we have learned the hard way there's no where else to go. And there's no one else to turn to.

The people who lined Jesus' path were singing and shouting—and praying. These were people who had hoped before, and who had been bitterly disappointed before. These were people who had aches and pains and worries and fears and nowhere to go. Nowhere, except to the God who made them, and who promised to love them, and love them always. Hosanna. Save us Lord, we're begging you. And so are we. And the rest of the story, the week that is to come—it's the story of how God heard our prayer, and how God answered—the Lord Jesus, who died and rose again.

In His name we pray Hosanna! In His name we pray, AMEN.