

Matt 21 1-11 Matt 27 11-54: Palm Sunday 09.04.17

Today is the beginning of our journey into Holy week. We process with palms, to recall Christ's entry into Jerusalem and in our Gospel reading, we travel with Jesus, from the streets of Jerusalem, through Golgotha towards the earth-shattering events of the cross and resurrection. It is a journey from triumph, through despair and towards the promise of new life.

The central purpose of our journey is summed up in the single word which is said repeatedly by the crowds who greet Jesus in Jerusalem. It is an Aramaic word which is not easily translated, so the author of Matthew keeps it in its original form, hosanna, which means 'save us', but also, 'glory' as a joyful hymn of praise to God.

Hosanna, is a Jewish liturgical phrase to appeal to God for future salvation and also give thanks for past deliverances. We hear it in Ps 118 (verse 25,26)

'Save us, (hosanna) we beseech you, O Lord!..Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'

This psalm is recited at Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, the two great tales of deliverance, in the Jewish liturgical calendar.

So when the people of Jerusalem cry, 'Hosannah' to Jesus they are talking about deliverance. 'Hosannah to the Son of David', they cry, recalling the past victories of their first King, David, but also a prophecy by Nathan, that a future King, the *Son of David*, will reign forever (2 Sam 7: 13-14).

'Save us,' the people of Jerusalem cry to Jesus.

But the thieves on the cross, mock this prayer: 'If you are the Son of God,' they say, 'then save yourself!' And the religious establishment joins in: 'He cannot save himself' they say to Jesus.

Behind their mockery, of course, is fear. They stare into the face of Jesus and see only death. Even Jesus, at his darkest hour, sees not deliverance, but destitution.

'My God, My God,' he cries, 'why have you forsaken me?'

Where is the promised salvation? The people's cry of hosanna becomes Jesus' cry of despair. And seemingly the answer is silence.

But we know that in the silence of that moment, the answer has already come.

The past and the future merge in a moment that comes with power and comes to disturb.

Those without faith, scatter.

But those who keep watch, they are the ones who see the power of God's answer.

They are the ones who say of Jesus, 'Truly, this man was *God's Son*.'

And we are on a journey with them, towards Easter, towards a new cry of hosanna.

No longer a prayer for deliverance but a word for glory and rejoicing.

Hosanna, rejoice.

Hosanna to the Son of David.

Rejoice in the Son of God.

Amen.