

3/24/24 Christ Fellowship

Hosannah – John 12

Have you ever really, really wanted something; begged for it, prayed for it, dreamed about it and then got it and wished you hadn't? Maybe it was a person. The first time you saw him, you thought he looked tall, dark and handsome. Then after you married him, he became fat, dumb and mean. Maybe it was a thing, like a new vehicle. That heavy duty pickup you wanted so bad just meant the repair bills were heavy duty. Or maybe it was a job that you just knew was going to give you financial freedom but you didn't know you would be chained to the office.

Maybe it was because you didn't understand it or maybe the object in question failed to live up to what it claimed. Or maybe you just didn't want to see the truth of the matter and after you got what you wanted, you were disappointed. I was at the grocery store the other day and took my groceries out to the car. I was returning the cart to the little stall and a guy who was walking in asked if he could just take it. I said, *"Sure. It makes a lot of noise but it works."* And the guy said, *"That's okay. My wife is the same way."*

How many marriages end because the person you marry is not the same person you dated? How many people get fired from their job because they didn't understand what the job really entailed? And how many people dip their toe into Christianity but find out that Jesus is more than just a glorified Santa Claus? And when they make a wish and it isn't granted like they want, they lose interest.

I'm afraid the people of Jerusalem were that way with Jesus. They wanted a Savior. They needed a Savior. They were in bondage physically and spiritually. The problem was, they only really wanted physical salvation, not all that spiritual stuff. They wanted freedom but on their terms. They wanted the freedom to live life the way they wanted. The thing is, they once had that kind of freedom and it led to the bondage they were in. Let's read about it in **John chapter 12**. Morris told me that since it was Palm Sunday, I should read something from the Book of Palms. 😊 I told him the best I could do was to read this passage.

John 12:12-16 says, *"The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. 13 They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the king of Israel!" 14 Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: 15 "Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt."*

16 At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.

This occasion is written about in all four Gospels but I like John's version of it. It starts off by saying, "The next day" which would have been Monday with the Passover coming on Friday. We don't know how many people were in town to celebrate the Passover this year but it might have been as many as a quarter of a million to a million people all total. From all the other Gospels, we can see that there are really two or three large groups of people in town.

One group was just there for the Passover. Some just came to see Jesus and some came to see Lazarus whom Jesus had healed. But everybody knew the name of Jesus. Everybody was wondering if He would show up this year because they all knew he was basically a wanted man. The religious Jews wanted a time and place to kill Him. They already had a reason. He was a threat to their power.

If you remember, up until this time, Jesus had continued saying His time had not yet come. When His mother asked Him about the wine at the wedding in Cana, Jesus said, "*My time has not yet come.*" Other times when He did a miracle or people were trying to crown Him King, Jesus would say, "*My time has not yet come.*" In those cases, it wasn't time for Jesus to fully reveal Himself as the Messiah.

But now...in Jerusalem...with thousands and thousands of people crowding in to watch and all eyes on Him, Jesus comes riding into town on the foal of a donkey, fulfilling prophecy from **Zechariah 9:9** that says he would do just that. And this time He might as well have had a neon sign on His head that said, "Messiah." Nobody was misunderstanding this. They all knew and they all loved it because they thought Jesus was coming back as the ruling and reigning King who was going to get them out from under the Roman rule that they hated.

So, they shouted "*Hosanna!*" which was taken from **Psalms 118**. It means literally, "Save now" and the people wanted Jesus to be their Savior. They waved palm branches which symbolized victory. They were putting their clothes on the road in front of the donkey to symbolize the kingship of Jesus. The whole place was in an uproar. They were so excited...until they realized a few days later that Jesus was not there to give them victory over Rome. He wanted to give them eternal victory over sin and death.

In just the very next passage right after this in **John 12**, it says that Jesus said, *“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.* Right there He says it is finally time. But then He goes on to say, *“Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be.”* And don’t you know some of those that heard Him say that went...“Uh oh”?

Then the people were watching Him even closer and listening more intently to what He said. And when Jesus talked about being *“lifted up”* as how He was about to die, the people started backpedaling with all that *“Hosanna”* stuff. Then maybe they heard about Him washing feet as a model. They heard Him talk about loving each other even when people hate you and abuse you and how you will be put out of the synagogue for following Him and they really had second thoughts about this Jesus guy. Maybe they were mistaken about Him really being the Messiah. And then by the time Jesus got arrested, they had completely changed their minds and so much so that when He was tried by Pilate, some of those same people that cried out *“Hosanna”* were now crying out, *“Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”* They even told Pilate to release Barrabas the criminal but not Jesus. *“Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”*

Can you imagine people being so fickle and so sure about something on one day and yet change their mind on another day? Aren’t you glad we aren’t like those crazy Israelis? Except, how many people do you know just like that? How many of us are just like that? I remember several years back when a lady came to our church in dire need of a lot of help. She had family problems and money problems and drug problems and her life was just a mess. And she just walked in one Sunday morning and asked for help and, boy, did our church step up and help her!

We knew she wasn’t a believer but we helped her in every possible way we could. Money, time, resources, food pantry and much more. And she began to attend our church for a while and I remember one Sunday she came early to talk to me. She needed lots more help but I finally decided she needed Jesus more than she needed Christ Fellowship. It wasn’t that I didn’t want to help her anymore because, in fact, we did; quite a bit. But I introduced her to the Savior. And she accepted Him. She believed. And that was a great time.

But she continued to make bad choices and she kept coming back to the church but you could tell she was just coming for the help. I think she realized that becoming a Christian didn’t mean the end of all her troubles. Especially when she was the source of most of

those troubles. And she finally quit coming and I have lost track of her over the years. I hope she's doing okay.

Have you ever tried those Mr. Clean Magic Erasers? They really do work like magic on so many things. I thought I was just always going to have stains on some wood at the house but those things really got rid of it. And when you're done, you just throw them away. It's pretty cool.

But that's not always how Jesus works. Yes, there is nothing or nobody better for cleaning up your life but you can't just use Him and throw Him away. Yes, He shows grace and mercy and compassion to everybody who asks but we take on some responsibility with this relationship. When we become Christians and accept Jesus to be our Savior, He also has to become our Lord. And when He says to be holy as He is holy, He means it.

When He says to love your enemies, it's a command. When He says looking at a woman with lust is the same as adultery, it's truth. When He says not to covet or not to worry or not to swear, to do so is sin. When He says not to take His name in vain by saying OMG or any other variation, don't do it!

See, Jesus wants to have a relationship with you. And with a relationship, there is give and take. It's the only way a relationship will work. So, yes, God is very generous and will often help us when we get in trouble. In fact, He tells us to ask for just that in **Hebrews 4:16** which says, *“Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*

But He is not a genie in a bottle here to grant all your wishes. He requires something of us when we come to Him for salvation and what He requires is ALL of us. He wants every part of us dedicated to Him. Before we came to Christ we were slaves to sin. It's what we did. We were helpless to get away from it. But now that we are believers, we are slaves to God. **Romans 6** tells us, *“Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.”*

And even as slaves to God we will still endure hard times. We know the rain falls on the just and the unjust. (Matt. 5) In fact, sometimes God even causes bad things to happen to us as part of His pruning of us to make us look and act more like Him. So, if you are

coming to Jesus to solve all your problems and take away all the consequences of your poor life choices, you are sadly mistaken.

But here is the thing so many people miss who just dip their toe in Christianity. We don't follow Jesus because He takes away all our problems. We follow Jesus partly because He goes through those problems with us. And like it says in **Psalm 16:11**, in His presence there is fullness of joy! Yes, we can have joy in our problems. Ask an Atheist how that's working out for them. Shoot, ask a Buddhist or a Muslim how that's working out for them. It's not. Because that joy comes supernaturally from God when we are in a relationship with Him.

We follow Jesus because of the peace that comes with that relationship. **Philippians 4** says, *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

Peace! We can have peace in the difficulties of this life through Jesus. We can have peace and joy plus we have the assurance of eternal life in heaven with Jesus. What's that worth? Is it worth your life here on earth? Your life, which is but a vapor, a breath, a shadow and then it's gone.

So, there are two ways to miss the boat when it comes to Jesus. You can come to Him to solve all your worldly problems but pretty quickly you will find out that doesn't work. Or you can think that Jesus means religion which is all a bunch of don't do this and don't do thats. I used to think that way when I was a kid. You know, as a kid it seemed like everybody everywhere was telling me don't do that. Don't say that. Don't go there. Don't have fun. Don't smile. That's wrong. Stop it. And to me, all this church stuff was just more of the same.

So, as soon as I could get out of my parents' house, boy, I was gone. I did what I wanted when I wanted and do you know what happened? I've never been more miserable. But as I got older, I realized what freedom really was. **Galatians 5:1** says that it is for freedom that Christ has set us free. And what that means is that we are free from being slaves to sin because where there is sin, there are consequences. And Jesus said in **John 10:10** that He came to give us a full and abundant life, not one marked by consequences.

Thomas Huxley said, *“A man's worst difficulties begin when he is able to do as he likes.”* That is a lesson the Jews have or should have learned for thousands of years. And it's a lesson we should have learned by now as well.

I remember years ago, I wanted to know how to have joy. What's a guy gotta do to have joy around here? So, I began a deep dive into scripture to see who had joy and what were their circumstances? Do you know what I found? The secret to joy is always obedience. The people in scripture that were joyful were obedient to God's laws. And the cool thing is that it's the same today. Think about those joyful people you know in this life or those you have known. How did they feel about obeying God's commands?

Psalm 37:4 says, *"Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart."* **Psalm 128:21** says, *"Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in obedience to him"* and **John 13:17** says, *"If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."* That word "blessed" means happy or joyful.

So...if you want to be completely free from all worldly problems...I can't help you with that. BUT if you want help with those problems and joy and peace in the midst of those problems, If you want the Creator of the universe to be with you in those problems and to give you wisdom through His Spirit, all you have to do is be obedient.

Do you know what else you get with a relationship with God through His son Jesus? It's kind of a big deal. We also get the assurance of eternal life in Heaven as co-heirs with Jesus to all the good things Heaven has to offer. And I know what you're thinking. Oh, Todd. That's too much. You're exaggerating.

No. I promise it's true. I know it's true because Romans 8 tells us that if we are truly believers then we are God's children and if we are God's children then we will be co-heirs with Jesus. I told you it was a big deal! I can't wrap my brain around that. I don't deserve that. I haven't done enough good things. I doubt my good deeds would outweigh my bad deeds. How can I be a co-heir with Jesus when I die and go to Heaven?

Well, thankfully, it has nothing to do with how good we are. All you have to do is believe. We believe that Jesus the Son, who is God, was sent by God the Father to die on the cross to pay the price for your sins that the Father said was due. It's called grace and mercy. It means we don't get what we do deserve and we do get what we don't deserve. Thank you, Lord!

Are you a true believer? Have you really asked God to be your Lord and not just your Savior? Ask Him today to forgive you of all your sins and to cleanse you of all unrighteousness. And He will do it. Do it right now as the music plays.