



Hymn: StF 262 All glory, laud and honour Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBfJyDolwA&t=3s>

All glory, laud and honour
to thee, Redeemer, King,
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring!

Thou art the King of Israel,
Thou David's royal Son,
Who in the Lord's name comes,
The King and Blessèd One.

All glory, laud and honour
to thee, Redeemer, King,
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring!

The company of angels
Are praising thee on high,
And mortal men and all things

Created make reply.

All glory, laud and honour
to thee, Redeemer, King,
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring!

The people of the Hebrews
With palms before thee went;
Our praise and prayer and anthems
Before thee we present.

All glory, laud and honour
to thee, Redeemer, King,
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring!

To thee before thy Passion

They sang their hymns of praise;
To thee now high exalted
Our melody we raise.

All glory, laud and honour
to thee, Redeemer, King,
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring!

Thou didst accept their praises;
Accept the prayers we bring,
Who in all good delightest,
Thou good and gracious King.

All glory, laud and honour
to thee, Redeemer, King,
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring!

Prayer : God, who is king of all creation, today we celebrate the arrival of your Son as king in the city of Jerusalem. But Jesus, who emptied himself to come to us in human likeness shows us today a different kind of power.

Another king would have arrived on a war horse, but our king arrives, humbly, on a donkey. Another king would have been welcomed with flags, but our king is greeted with palm branches. Another king would be proud and violent, but our king is obedient to God's will even to the point of death on the cross. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!

Yet we must confess that we still cling to human ideas of power. We are easily taken in by leaders who use violent rhetoric who make war at a whim, and who lust for wealth and glory. The peaceable kingdom of the One who rode a donkey who came, not to be served, but to serve always seems out of reach.

And even those of us who claim to follow him find his way of humility a hard path to follow. For we confess that we have fickle hearts: we, too, might have welcomed him with palms on Sunday and cried 'crucify him' on Friday.

Forgive us, we pray, our lack of faithfulness to Christ.

Silence.....

For all who repent and believe there is forgiveness through the humble life of Jesus Christ, and of his death on the cross. Accept the forgiveness of Christ and know the peace of God.

O God, whose power we see most fully in the cross of Jesus Christ, grant that, by your Spirit the same mind would be in us that was in Christ Jesus- a spirit of humility, love and peace- and that in serving our neighbours we would give glory to the name of Jesus, the name above all names the crucified one who is now exalted above all things in heaven and earth. Amen.

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Hymn: The Goodness of Jesus

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsJtWJTSVTw>

Come you weary heart now to Jesus
Come you anxious soul now and see
There is perfect love and comfort in your tears
Rest here in His wondrous peace

Oh the goodness, the goodness of Jesus
Satisfied, He is all that I need
May it be, come what may, that I rest all my days
In the goodness of Jesus

Come find what this world cannot offer
Come and find your joy here complete
Taste the living water, never thirst again
Rest here in His wondrous peace
Oh the goodness, the goodness of Jesus
Satisfied, He is all that I need
May it be, come what may, that I rest all my days
In the goodness of Jesus

Come and find your hope now in Jesus
He is all He said He would be
Grace is overflowing from the Saviour's heart
Rest here in His wondrous peace
Oh the goodness, the goodness of Jesus
Satisfied, He is all that I need
May it be, come what may, that I rest all my days
In the goodness of Jesus

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Reading: Matthew 21:1-11 : As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.' This took place to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet: *'Say to Daughter Zion, "See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."*

The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Hosanna in the highest heaven!' When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, 'Who is this?' The crowds answered, 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.'

Message : 'A Face in the Crowd'

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, 'Who is this?' The crowds answered, 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.'

Who is this crowd who are with Jesus as he makes his way towards Jerusalem? At the centre would have been Jesus' own disciples - in the widest sense. Not just the immediate circle of twelve around him but all those who at that time were travelling alongside him as followers. What were their expectations? Jesus had quite clearly said his mission in going to Jerusalem was to suffer and die but they were still trying to reconcile in their minds what it meant to set that side by side with their knowledge that Jesus was the Messiah. I'm guessing that you and I would have been much the same. You know what Jesus has said but ... as you shout your hosannas you must be hoping that God has something different in store for his Messiah than what Jesus is envisaging.

Then there are the crowds of fellow pilgrims walking that same road. If you're one of those you are likely to be caught up in the moment. It's quite an experience marching towards Jerusalem, the Holy City. There were set psalms that you'd be reciting along with your fellow pilgrims. You're in a state of heightened religious passion and as you look across the Kidron valley to Jerusalem you see signs that the Romans are calling the shots. This is an occupied city in an occupied country. And here is Jesus riding with you on a donkey. The significance of this isn't lost on you. Firstly, his starting point was the village of Bethphage, which means 'House of unripe figs'. It pointed towards occasions in the Old Testament where God criticised Israel and their leadership for failing to produce the fruit he was desiring. Then, in choosing to ride on a donkey, Jesus is enacting prophecy from the Old Testament book of Zechariah. There God's Messiah enters Jerusalem in just such a way – riding on a donkey - having been victorious over all of God's enemies. This is Jesus announcing himself to be that Messiah. Surely, you think, this is Jesus coming to rid you of the Romans. So, you shout 'Hosanna!' – God save us – and you mean it from the bottom of your heart and you see Jesus as the person through whom God is going to act.

Doubtless, too, there were others caught up in what was going on, local residents who have come to see what all the fuss is about and who have quickly embraced the excitement and vision that this crowd seems to have.

Crowds follow Jesus through Holy Week. They follow him as he enters the Temple. They watch him heal the blind and lame who are there and they watch as he knocks down the tables of the merchants and the moneychangers, this man who is so full of God's grace and God's truth. They follow him through the Temple courtyards as he astounds everyone with his teaching. This is a crowd of whom the religious authorities are afraid knowing that they can't arrest Jesus in public because of his popularity.

Let's move on to the end of that week and look at another reading where a crowd is mentioned. It's early on Friday morning and Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor, has been asked to come to a decision on a prisoner brought to him by the religious authorities. Yes, it's Jesus. Pilate does not believe Jesus to be guilty of any crime yet he makes use of a traditional custom where he can offer a public choice as to a prisoner the people wish him to release. Presumably he expects those there to vote for Jesus but they don't. Stirred up by the religious leaders, they call instead for Jesus' execution. What gives? How can people go in a few days from proclaiming Jesus as Messiah to demanding that he die.

Let's ask that question again. Who makes up this crowd? I can tell you who probably isn't there. I recall from my youth reading a prize-winning short story in a magazine that used the idea of time travel to imagine a future where time travel tourism is a reality. In that imagined future you could go back and visit the great events of history but with the proviso that you could take part but you couldn't change anything. In the story, somebody went back to the crucifixion and took part in its events only to realise that the crowd before Pilate weren't locals but were time tourists just like them.

I'm pretty sure the crowd who called for Jesus' crucifixion wasn't made up of time travellers but who were they? Think for a moment of cells in your body. It's made up of crowds and crowds of them and, most of the time, they're pretty healthy. But get some cancerous cells in there and they will start to turn the cells around them from healthy to unhealthy. Is that what happened to our Palm Sunday crowd through the stirring up of the religious leaders? Were their minds poisoned and their opinion of Jesus changed? There may have been some like that but in all probability, this was a different crowd. Pilate most likely dealt with Jesus early in the morning between about 6am and 8am. Most of the pilgrims would probably have gone home the previous night to lodgings outside of the city and only returned for the first hour of prayer in the Temple at 9 o'clock.

The crowd before Pilate, therefore, is more likely to consist of people who actually lived in Jerusalem; those who were already there hoping to see Pilate for other reasons and maybe some who were there because of the early meeting of the Sanhedrin and all that followed it. These aren't Jesus' supporters. They may not even have known who he was. The question for them, therefore, isn't about shifting allegiances but about why they condemn an innocent man to death. They are not alone. Pilate, himself, famously washes his hands of the decision even though he believes Jesus to be innocent. There must have been unconvinced members of the Sanhedrin, too, who failed to speak up just like members of political parties today whose leaders are behaving badly. And even Peter, who has no say in the decision making, is forced through fear to deny Jesus three times. The statesman Edmund Burke once said, 'All that is needed for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing'.

We are all faces in many different crowds. We need to learn from this story that what we say and do as part of those crowds really does matter. We may think that our tiny contribution is a drop in an ocean but can we afford to do nothing and know that if everyone were to do that then evil would most certainly triumph. And remember that when we do come together with others as part of a crowd – particularly a Holy Spirit inspired crowd - then people really do take notice. The religious authorities were afraid to arrest Jesus in public because of the crowds. Pilate did what he did despite his better intentions because of the crowd. Never forget, crowds have clout.

Hymn: StF 681 Community of Christ

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U114i3IOPBU>

Community of Christ
Who make the Cross your own
Live out your creed and risk your life
For God alone
The God who wears your face
To whom all worlds belong
Whose children are of every race
And every song

Community of Christ
Through whom the word must sound
Cry out for justice and for peace
The whole world round
Disarm the powers that war
And all that can destroy
Turn bombs to bread and tears of anguish
Into joy

Community of Christ
Look past the Church's door
And see the refugee the hungry
And the poor
Take hands with the oppressed
The jobless in your street
Take towel and water that you wash
Your neighbour's feet

When menace melts away
So shall God's will be done
The climate of the world be peace
And Christ its sun
Our currency be love
And kindness our law
Our food and faith be shared as one
For evermore

Prayer : Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for everyone according to their needs.

Holy Lord, all glory and praise are offered to You, for You are our Redeemer and King, our Savior and Friend. We adore You and exalt Your holy name. *People: Hosanna, Lord Jesus. Come and save us!*

Reign over us, not according to our human devising and perceptions, but according to Your good and gracious will. Shape our attitude to be like Yours living a life of humility and obedience. *People: Hosanna, Lord Jesus. Come and save us!*

Merciful Lord, Your grace is sufficient for all our needs, and You have promised to be the strength of the weary, the hope of those who fear, the healing of the ill, the fullness of those disabled, and the peace of all who are distressed. Hear us on behalf of all in need, that they may be well supplied by Your grace in every time of trouble.
Hosanna, Lord Jesus. Come and save us!

Although we have deserved Your righteous wrath and punishment, yet we ask You, O most merciful Father, not to remember our sins. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and grant us Your forgiveness.
Hosanna, Lord Jesus. Come and save us!

Lord, during this Holy Week, strengthen our faith and trust in You. As we move from the triumph of Palm Sunday to the institution of Your Supper, to the agony of Good Friday, to the glories of Easter, be with us and send Your Spirit that our meditation of Your holy Passion may move us to greater love for You and for others.
Hosanna, Lord Jesus. Come and save us!

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

(Trinity Lutheran Church, Lisle, Illinois – taken from thepastorsworkshop.com)

The Lord's Prayer : Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come; your will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: StF 277 My Song is Love Unknown Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bWRcAa-nFIA>

My song is love unknown,
My Saviour's love to me;
Love to the loveless shown,
That they might lovely be.
O who am I, that for my sake
My Lord should take frail flesh and die?

He came from His blest throne
Salvation to bestow;
But men made strange, and none
The longed-for Christ would know:
But O! my Friend, my Friend indeed,
Who at my need His life did spend.

Sometimes they strew His way,
And His sweet praises sing;
Resounding all the day
Hosannas to their King:
Then "Crucify!" is all their breath,
And for His death they thirst and cry.

Why, what hath my Lord done?
What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run,

He gave the blind their sight,
Sweet injuries! Yet they at these
Themselves displease, and 'gainst Him rise.

They rise and needs will have
My dear Lord made away;
A murderer they save,
The Prince of life they slay,
Yet cheerful He to suffering goes,
That He His foes from thence might free.

In life, no house, no home
My Lord on earth might have;
In death no friendly tomb
But what a stranger gave.
What may I say? Heav'n was His home;
But mine the tomb wherein He lay.

Here might I stay and sing,
No story so divine;
Never was love, dear King!
Never was grief like Thine.
This is my friend, in whose sweet praise
I all my days could gladly spend