

Hosanna! Hosanna!

Matthew 21:1-11

April 5, 2020 Palm Sunday

Were You There?

Bill Mann, a gospel singer was one of the ministry team members working with Rev. Billy Graham. One day, to his surprise he had a visitor right after the worship service was over. More surprisingly, I noticed that his guest was deaf and blind. She asked Bill to sing the last hymn he sang at the end of the service one more time.

The hymn was "Were you there." Bill gladly and willingly and softly sang it again, letting her touch his lips, since she was not able to hear. "Were you there when they crucified my Lord"

While singing, he noticed that the woman began to weep, stuttering with tears in her eyes, "I was there!" "I was there!" "Yes, I was there!" The woman was Helen Keller (1880-1968) who was the first deaf-blind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree in America.

How about you? "Were you there when they crucified the Lord?" But the truth of the matter is that no, we were not there when they crucified the Lord."

Were you there when the Lord entered Jerusalem, riding a donkey?

No, we were not there to witness people lining the streets, waving palms and laying down their coats for Jesus to walk upon.

Nevertheless, thanks to our imagination, even though we were not there physically on the street for that first Palm Sunday parade, we can be there and join the crowd. Imagination is truly a God given wonderful gift to all of us. Yes, we can wave palms with all the people there and see Jesus riding a donkey. Yes, we can.

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We also can hear people raising their voice and join them crying out, "Hosanna, Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in

the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest heaven" Do you hear what I hear?

Hosanna. Hosanna is neither English nor Korean. It is a Hebrew expression meaning "Save Us Now!" which became an exclamation of praise.

So when we join the crowd, saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," what we are saying is "Blessings to you, Jesus who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessings in the highest heaven!" It is a welcoming praise to the Lord.

Today, on 2020 Palm Sunday, we raise our voices and welcome Jesus to our overwhelmingly frightened and chaotic and confused world. We need Jesus coming to our lives here and now.

Let me share with you an insightful article I received from one of my colleagues last week. It goes:

I don't know if you agree, but something invisible came and put everything in its place.

Suddenly the gasoline went down, pollution went down, people started to have more time - so much time that they do not know what to do with it - parents are spending time with their kids as a family, work is no longer a priority, or traveling or social life either.

Suddenly we silently see within ourselves and understand the value of the words "solidarity", "love", "strength", "empathy" and "faith".

In an instant we realized that we are all in the same boat; rich and poor. That the supermarket shelves are empty and the hospitals are full. New cars and old cars also stand in the garages, simply because nobody can get out. Empty streets, less pollution, clean air, the land also breathes.

The human returns to his origins, realizing that with or without money, the important thing is to survive. Today, health is the main thing, even in spite of wanting to have or possessing.

It took 6 days for the universe to establish the social equality that was said to be impossible.

Fear invaded everyone. At least this happened to realize the vulnerability of the human being.

Nature is forcing us to clean up the mess made by ourselves.

Our overthrown gods: -Money -Sports -Fame -Politics

What the coronavirus is teaching us:

- Our best protection: GOD*
- Our best refuge: HOME*
- Our best company: FAMILY*
- Our real time: TODAY*
- Nature's call: STOP US*
- Its message: WAIT, RESPECT*

We are not gods, we are not kings, we do not have the power of controlling everything.

We are part of a whole, fragile, brittle and vulnerable something.

Part of a whole something that we wanted to dominate & today is telling us: Stop, breathe, respect.

Go back to the basics, to the essentials, that the peace of your soul guide you towards what you are: a CREATION by "GOD".

It has some good points. Hasn't it? I could not find who wrote this.

Do you recall the original meaning of Hosanna? Hosanna is a Hebrew expression meaning, "Save us now"

Today we raise our voices, saying, 'Hosanna, Save us now!' We raise our voices, crying out "Hosanna!" Come Jesus! Come and save us now, Jesus!"

Our crying out is our repenting prayer of confession.

“O Lord, we know what we have done against you and against one another.” “We have sinned, O Lord.” “We lived as if we can control everything and as if we are the center of the universe.”

“We have been also destroying your beautiful creation.” “We have sinned against you, O Lord.” “Forgive us, O Lord. Hosanna! Save us now!”

“Save us to know who you are and whose we are. Save us to glorify you with all we think, do and say.

Save us to love the Lord with all our heart, with all your soul and with all your mind and save us to love our FRANs, Friends, Relatives, Associates and Neighbors.

“Hosanna. Save us now.” This is our prayer of supplication on Palm Sunday today.

2

Back to the ranch,

Do you hear another voice in the middle of the crowd? Do you hear a passer-by asking a question on the first Palm Sunday? “Who is it?”

“Who is it really?”

Some believed that Jesus should have been an armed messiah, a military leader. These people believed that they could be free only if they were to throw off the yoke of Roman oppression.

Then there were those in that Palm Sunday crowd who believed that Jesus was an imposter, a troublemaker. Indeed, Jesus did upset the religious establishment.

There are some who crowd replied to this question, saying, “It is Jesus the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee”

The question is “Who is this man Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee to you? What does Jesus mean for your life, my life and our lives?”

We are mistaken if we believe that this Jesus came to free us from all of our earthly cares and suffering. Many people we know seek and want that kind of Jesus.

Surely our Lord did do miraculous things as he healed those who were blind, lame, deaf, afflicted with leprosy. Jesus made it very clear to us that God intends and desires that we live our lives as whole, healthy and happy persons in this world.

Yet despite the fact that Jesus did everything that he could to alleviate the pain and suffering for other people, he could not escape suffering himself. Yes, he was spat upon, beaten, crucified as a common criminal. He suffered.

Through the life of Jesus, we have learned that pains, suffering and evil are just part of human existence and Jesus faced them like we do. Yes, he suffered.

Who is Jesus?

We acknowledge first of all that he is the one who suffered and died for us so that we might be freed from sin.

However, we need also to understand that Jesus is the one who suffers with us, the one who feels our pain whenever we suffer. This is one way that Jesus brings healing power into our lives.

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Are you in pain and suffering? God know what you are going through. God comes to you and hold your hands.

God weeps sitting next to you when you weep. God sings a song of assurance when you feel lonely and deserted. God embraces you when you cry in darkness. Our God is Emmanuel, God with us.

Johann Christoph Blumhardt, a German theologian in his book, "Now is Eternity" describes his faith in God Emmanuel. *"Even though we have not yet reached true blessedness, we can hope for it, for we do have a Father in heaven. He is a loving Father, and we may call to him with hearts full of joy and confidence. In this certainty a wave of*

blessedness will come over us, and it will never leave us, even though we suffer deep anguish again and again. In this certainty we can weep and rejoice at the same time.”

We are in a turbulent and difficult and painful time. People die. Many people die. People suffer. Many people suffer. The whole world is suffering. Wondering how and when the pandemic would be over, we people are scared and tend to fall into despair.

But we, people of God do not lose heart.

No, we were not there physically when Jesus suffer and died on the cross. But Jesus is surely here with us now when we go through this global suffering. We may call to him with hearts full of hope and confidence, because he is the Lord and the Savior.

We cannot understand God’s providential will and work in the middle of this global Covid-19 crisis, for sure. But we do believe God is with us and God works in our midst. We do believe God with us is God who cares about us and heals our brokenness and restore us again as a new creation.

So we join the Psalmist today, singing with joy and confidence, “Yea, though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil: for thou art with us; thy rod and thy staff they comfort us.”

(Psalm 23:4) Amen

My Fairfield Grace sisters and brothers in Christ, we enter the week of 2020 Holy Week this week.

As we follow the Lord all the way to the cross, I pray that we all have the opportunity to renew our relationship with the Lord and with one another. And so we may be a new creation again to honor and love and respect God and honor and love and respect one another.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.