

THE SERMON

Palm Sunday

Sunday, March 29, 2026

From Sorrow to Song
Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

Mark 11:1-11

Beloved Church, I am almost sure that if I say the name ***Jeanette Threlfall***, you are probably going to say: Who is she?

Well, she is the one who wrote the hymn "***Hosanna, Loud Hosanna.***" This famous hymn that we sing almost every year during Palm Sunday.

She was not a famous theologian. She was not a pastor, or wrote eight thousand hymns like ***Charles Wesley***, or ***Isaac Watts***. Jeanette Threlfall was a 19th-century English hymn writer who paid close attention to how faith is formed in ordinary people, especially children. She wrote many of her hymns so that young voices could sing the great truths of the faith with understanding and joy.

You might think that Jeanette Threlfall had many reasons not to praise God. Orphaned young, shuttled among relatives, she was injured in an accident and became invalid. Yet she remained cheery and faithful, penning many Christian poems and hymns. Her life was a cry of hosanna! To her victorious Savior.

This particular hymn was written for Palm Sunday, and is intentionally simple, memorable, and joyful. Threlfall wanted children to know the story of Jesus entering Jerusalem. She didn't want a distant Bible scene, but as a living moment of praise. That is why the hymn sounds almost like a parade: ***"Hosanna, loud hosanna, the little children sang."*** You can hear the rhythm of movement, the waving of branches, the excitement in the air.

But what is striking is this: even though the hymn is joyful and bright, Threlfall does not turn Palm Sunday into a fairy tale. She anchors the song in Scripture and lets the truth of the story remain intact. The praise is real, but it is fragile. The joy is loud, but it will not last long. In that way, the hymn teaches us something important: Christian praise is not naïve. It exists alongside suffering.

That tension—between joy and sorrow, praise and pain—is exactly where Palm Sunday lives.

Today we continue our series ***From Sorrow to Song – Singing Our Way to Easter***. On Palm Sunday, the song is loud and full of joy, yet sorrow is already close at hand. The crowd shouts “*Hosanna!*” but the cross is already casting its shadow.

Mark 11 tells the story of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It is a familiar story, often reenacted with palm branches, processions, and joyful music. But Mark tells it with remarkable restraint. There are no speeches, no miracles, no dramatic confrontations. Jesus enters, looks around the temple, and quietly leaves.

This is not the parade the crowd expected. And it raises a question that Palm Sunday always asks us: ***What kind of Savior are we really hoping for—and are we willing to follow the one who comes?***

We will hear this Sunday, over and over the word “Hosanna.” This is a word we often treat as pure praise, but it originally means “***Save us.***” It is both celebration and plea. When the crowd shouts, “***Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord,***” they are expressing deep longing. They long for freedom from Roman occupation. They long for justice. They long for a king who will set things right.

This longing is not wrong. God hears it. Jesus does not silence the crowd. He receives their praise. But there is a disconnect between what the people expect and what Jesus brings. They imagine power, but Jesus chooses humility. They imagine victory through force, but Jesus comes riding on a colt, not a warhorse.

My friends, Palm Sunday reminds us that it is possible to praise Jesus sincerely and still misunderstand him. Yes! Let me repeat this statement: ***"It is possible to praise Jesus sincerely and still misunderstand him."*** It means that people can genuinely express admiration, hope, and worship toward Jesus, yet have an incomplete or mistaken view of who he is and what his mission entails.

In short, sincere praise doesn't guarantee full understanding. Our hopes and expectations can shape how we see Jesus, sometimes leading us to embrace an image of him that fits our desires rather than the reality of his sacrificial love and call to discipleship.

This challenges us to listen carefully, study Scripture deeply, and be willing to follow Jesus even when his way is unexpected or difficult.

Mark tells us that Jesus carefully arranges this entry. He sends the disciples to bring a colt, fulfilling the imagery

of Zechariah: a king who comes in peace. Jesus is making a statement, but it is not the one the crowd wants.

Why, because this king does not seize control. This king does not overthrow Rome. This king walks steadily toward suffering.

Jesus enters Jerusalem knowing what awaits him. He knows the cheers will fade. He knows betrayal, denial, and violence are coming. And still, he comes.

My friends, this is the heart of Palm Sunday: Jesus accepts our praise even when he knows we do not yet understand the cost of following him.

Palm Sunday moves quickly. In the span of one week, the crowd's voices will change. Some will disappear. Some will turn away. Some will cry out for crucifixion.

This is uncomfortable for us, because we would like to believe we would have stayed faithful. But Palm Sunday asks us to look honestly at ourselves.

How often do we praise Jesus when faith feels triumphant, but grow quiet when it becomes costly?

How often do we sing "Hosanna" on Sunday, but hesitate to follow on Friday?

The truth is, most betrayal does not begin with hatred. It begins with disappointment. Jesus does not meet expectations, and so we slowly withdraw.

This is where Palm Sunday becomes deeply personal. The Christian life is not about choosing between joy and sorrow. It is about holding them together.

We praise God not because life is always good, but because God is faithful even when life is hard.

We sing not because we understand everything, but because we trust the One we follow.

Jeanette Threlfall's hymn captures these ideas beautifully. This hymn invites even children to praise, knowing that faith will grow and deepen through struggle. This hymn teaches us that praise is not a denial of pain, but a way of carrying it before God.

And this hymn challenges us, too. Why? Because Palm Sunday invites us to examine our discipleship honestly.

Let me offer a few challenging reflections for us this morning.

The first challenging reflection is to **examine your expectations of Jesus**.

Are you following Christ for who he is, or for what you hope he will do for you?

Notice when your praise becomes conditional. Do you worship most freely when things are going well? ***What about those times when things are not the way you expected? Do you still worship God with the same attitude?***

The second challenging reflection is to **practice faithful presence.**

Will you stay with Jesus not only in the parade, but in the quiet, painful places of life?

Following Jesus means learning to praise even when the road leads toward the cross.

Mark ends the story in a surprising way. Jesus enters the temple, looks around, and leaves. No confrontation. No cleansing—yet. Just a pause.

It is as if the Gospel is asking us to sit with the tension. To not rush past Palm Sunday too quickly. To notice that the celebration is real, but incomplete.

This is where we are today—between the shouts of joy and the silence of the tomb. Between sorrow and song.

Friends, Palm Sunday does not ask us to choose between praise and pain. It invites us to bring both. To wave our palms honestly. To sing with open eyes. To

follow a Savior who enters in humility and walks faithfully toward the cross.

As we journey toward Easter, may we learn to sing not only when the road is easy, but when it is hard trusting that God is already at work, turning sorrow into song. Let us pray.

Faithful God, we praise you with joyful voices, and we bring you the pain we carry in our hearts. Teach us to follow Jesus not only in moments of celebration, but on the road that leads to the cross. Help us hold praise and pain together, trusting that your love will lead us through suffering into new life. As we walk toward Easter, turn our sorrow into song. Amen.