

## Hosanna in the Highest

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Mark 11:1-11

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## Hosanna in the Highest

11 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples

2 and said to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it.

3 If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.’ ”

4 And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it.

5 And some of those standing there said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?”

6 And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go.

7 And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it.

8 And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields.

9 And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

10 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”

11 And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

- **This is the word of the Lord, and we are grateful for it.**
  - **Please be seated.**

My roommate on my first deployment was a new lieutenant who had an undergraduate degree in Archeology.

Archeology is the study of human history and prehistory through the excavation of sites and the analysis of artifacts and other physical remains.

And there we were in the land between the two rivers: the Tigris and the Euphrates. Ancient Mesopotamia the birthplace of civilization.

If he had any spare time, he would wander around the Kirkuk Regional Airbase kicking over rocks in a search for ancient artifacts or physical remains. And to his credit he found several shards of pottery that could qualify.

I was kind of excited for him and in my own excitement I casually mentioned his find to our executive officer.

It turns out keeping and taking any kind of historical artifact as a soldier is a war crime. Those items would need to be turned over to the authorities of Iraq.

As it would turn out there was a local museum in the city of Kirkuk just off the base. And in coordinating with our Military Civil Affairs platoon to turn the items over to Iraq I got invited to go on the mission. We were going to take several pottery shards to the museum.

I couldn't wait! **I was going to visit a museum in the heart of Mesopotamia.** Can you imagine.

When the day came, I grabbed all of my gear and took my spot in the patrol.

It was a great day.

We stopped by several schools to deliver supplies to the faculty and kids.

There, I played hide and seek from the gunner's position of HUMVEE and even got a personal demonstration of the local kid's soccer skills. I watched as parents picked up their kids from school to walk them home. There were smiles and laughter that is always associated with the excitement and hopefulness of life.

From there we went on to a local police station where I was handcuffed by an Iraqi Police Officer. After my release I then demonstrated to him the "proper" handcuffing technique. It was so cool. Neither one of us could speak the other's language and yet there we were two police officers having a great time communicating through shared skills and concerns.

It was a far cry from my usual work as an Intelligence Officer.

By the time we got to the City Hall and Government complex I was beginning to understand that a Civil Affairs platoon had a much more relaxed understanding of security than I was used to. When I brought the lax in security to the attention of the officer in charge he said, "Well, take care of that L.T."

He didn't have any extra people, so I became the security. I went outside the front door and looked up. On the roof of every building were somewhere between one and five people all armed to the teeth: some Iraq police, some Iraq army, and some of unknown and dubious affiliation. It didn't look any different out the back door with the exception of a Rocket Propelled Grenade or two.

While we were on a peaceful mission it was clear we were not in Kansas.

But it didn't matter. **I was on my way to a museum in the heart of Mesopotamia.**

It was our last stop.

It was in a different section of town, and it took a little navigation to find it. It was not like the Kirkuk Citadel; built almost 3,000 years ago and easily identified by its massive walls and fortifications.

No, the museum was a red brick building with a small sign. It looked a lot like any other administrative building that you might find in the United States.

But the enthusiasm of the curator was palpable. He was grinning ear to ear and almost ran to meet us. He shook hands with the Major and asked if we had the items. After the Major nodded the curator led us into the building in a single file. I followed down several halls and passed several side rooms. I saw case after case and rack after rack...

...and each one was empty. No sarcophagi... no ancient inscriptions... nothing...

What we were providing, what we were delivering, was quite literally the first items that this library had seen in some time.

- How often do our expectations of reality color our interpretation of reality?
  - Did your experiences of school, from elementary into college, match your expectations?
  - What about your expectations of marriage?
    - Maybe they did in that first year or over the duration of the honeymoon period but as you came to settle into the reality of your marriage how far off were your expectations?
    - Was marriage what you expected it to be?
  - What about having children and raising a family?
    - I can tell you the things they taught us about having a baby were all but useless when it came to actually having a baby.
    - My expectations were destroyed over and over again through the birthing process and into the toddler years and I'm beginning to suspect it to continue.
  - What about retirement?
    - Most of our congregation is retired or of retiring age.

- Is this phase in your life what you expected?
- No, as we get older and mature into this life we become more and more comfortable with the idea that what we expect is, more often than not, very different from reality.
  - And yet, our expectations continue to color our interpretation and understanding of reality.
- In our passage this morning Jesus arranges for two of His disciples to retrieve a colt.
  - This is no small matter.
    - It is an indication that something has changed.
  - Up to this point Jesus had been telling many of those who had experienced His miracles to **“tell no one ([Mar 7:36](#)).”**
    - When He asked His disciples **“Who do people say that I am?”** and Peter identified Jesus as the Christ, **Jesus told His discipleship not to tell anyone ([Mar 8:30](#)).**
    - Those who witnessed the transfiguration too were told, **“to tell no one what they had seen... ([Mar 9:9](#))”**
- Now, Jesus was arranging an announcement; an announcement that would connect Him to an Old Testament prophecy found in the book of Zechariah...
  - “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey... ([Zech 9:9](#))”
    - There will be no keeping it silent now.
    - Jesus is announcing to all of Jerusalem... Behold, your king is coming to you.
- He was appealing to a long time hope and desire of the Israeli people...

- ...the removal of the yoke of the Gentiles from Israel.
  - Salvation from the yoke of Rome!
- Prophet after prophet had predicted that the restoration and future blessing of Israel would include the return of a rule by the house of David.
  - The prophet Jeremiah said, “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”
  - They expected that the Christ, the Messiah, would throw off gentile rule and usher in a new era of peace and prosperity for Israel.
    - And not just for Israel but for all the world!
      - with the Messiah of Israel; a king of kings.
    - Their messianic hopes were tied to their desire for their own king, a prosperous nation, and world influence.
  - Sadly, the disciples were not immune to this expectation.
    - The mother of the sons of Zebedee asked of Jesus, “Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom ([Mat20:21](#)).”
      - The request was built on the assumption of a Davidic kingdom restored by the Messiah; by the Christ.
        - With the disciples as His inner circle.
    - Many of the disciples were hoping for this kingdom.
      - They would have been familiar with Zechariah’s prediction.
    - At the prospect of retrieving this colt I imagine the twelve disciples growing excited...
      - its about to happen...

- ...we are finally going to get our kingdom.
- Even after Jesus was crucified and appeared to them they still asked, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel ([Act 1:6](#))?”
- They and those around them threw their cloaks on the colt, spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields.
- Some went before and some followed
  - **“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”**
  - They are echoing the words of [Psalm 118](#).
    - A psalm thanks God for deliverance and victory in the setting of a procession to the sanctuary.
      - A procession of victory!
  - The expectation was that Jesus would establish his kingdom immediately.
    - **Hosanna! Save us now! or Save us, we beseech thee!!!**
      - **Redress our grievances, and give us help from our oppression.**
        - **Hosanna in the highest!!!**
- And there is an interesting irony here.
  - In crying out for their King to save them they cry **“Hosanna in the highest.”**
    - They either meant let the heavenly hosts join with us in our appeal or let **the utmost degrees of hosanna, of**

**salvation**, and **of deliverance**, be communicated to thy people.

- The irony is that Jesus, as the son of God, could have appealed to that very host of heaven to assume the throne of Israel **and given them exactly what they were expecting...**
  - How easily could the son of God assumed sovereignty at that time???
  - **...but in doing so he would have left their utmost need of salvation and deliverance unanswered.**
  - **They would remain condemned before their God.**
    - **Dead in their transgressions.**
      - **Unable to go before God apart from judgment.**
- No, Jesus had their utmost need of salvation and deliverance in mind and so very anticlimactically...
  - He entered Jerusalem...
    - ...went into the temple, ...and looked around.
      - **“And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.”**
    - He wouldn't deliver Israel today... but very soon.
      - And in a way that would upend **their expectations** and change their understanding of reality.
    - Would they see it?
    - **No, Some would miss that very salvation, that very deliverance because it won't match their expectation?**
      - **He will die to deliver their** utmost degree of hosanna, of salvation, and deliverance.



- **He will die in order to answer their “Hosanna in the highest.”**
- Lent is a season of reflection and contemplation and this coming week is the final week of lent.
- It is the week that coincides with the passion week.
  - At the onset of the passion week Jesus enters Jerusalem in messianic fashion, mounted on a donkey, and is even greeted by an expectant crowd.
  - Our passage this morning presents the triumphal entry more somberly than the other gospel writers and paints Jesus as thoughtful and deliberate.
    - As Jesus returns to Bethany there is this thoughtful pause on the very edge of Passion week.
  - We too should take pause... and consider...
  - What is our expectation of the Messiah?
    - What is our highest need... our Hosanna in the highest?
    - What if what He came to save us from is higher than we expect?
    - Would we miss it because it doesn't match our expectations?
- I would challenge you this morning.
  - Do you know the gospel message?
  - Do you know the good news?
    - Write it down?
      - Consider it.
      - Reflect on it.
    - Could you articulate it to someone who doesn't know it?

A famous general would often take his little son into his arms and talk with him about Jesus.

The little boy never grew tired of hearing that sweet story for it was always new to him.

One day while sitting in his father's lap, he said to his child, "Would my little child like to go to heaven?"

The little boy replied, "Yes, papa,"

"But," said the father, "how can you go to heaven? Your heart is full of sin. How can you expect to go into God's presence and stand before Him?"

"But all are sinners, father," the child answered.

"That is true," replied the father; "and yet God has said that only the righteous will stand before Him. How then can my little boy expect to go there?"

The dear little boy's face grew very sad. Suddenly he burst into tears and exclaimed to his father, "Papa, Jesus can save me."

- **Hosanna in the highest!!!**
  - **Hosanna indeed!!!**