

Small Group Guide: "A Different Kind of Hosanna"

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

****Icebreaker Question:****

What images or memories come to mind when you think of Palm Sunday? How did you understand this day growing up?

Introduction (5 minutes)

This week we explored Palm Sunday beyond the cute parade imagery, discovering a politically explosive, theologically loaded moment when Jesus deliberately confronted both the crowd's expectations and our own. The word "Hosanna" means "Save us, please"—but the crowd and Jesus had very different ideas about what salvation looked like.

Key Takeaways

1. ****Hosanna is a cry for help, not a praise slogan**** - Originally meaning "Save us, please," it became a religious catchphrase filled with wrong expectations.
2. ****Jesus chose the way of the meek King**** - Riding a donkey instead of a warhorse, He refused to build His kingdom through force or political power.

3. **The crowd escorted both their King and the Lamb** - They celebrated a military victory while Jesus walked toward becoming the ultimate thanksgiving sacrifice (today).

4. **We often want Jesus on our terms** - Like the crowd, we welcome Jesus when He meets our expectations but struggle when He calls us to suffering, sacrifice, and surrender.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Context (15 minutes)

1. **The Setting:** How does understanding the Passover context—Jerusalem packed with pilgrims, Roman soldiers on alert, nationalist hopes running high—change the way you see Jesus' entry into the city?

2. **Loaded Symbols:** The sermon explained that palm branches were symbols of military victory (like the Maccabean revolt) and the Mount of Olives was associated with God's end-time intervention. What do you think went through the minds of Roman authorities watching this procession?

3. **The Donkey vs. The Warhorse:** Jesus deliberately chose to ride a donkey, fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy of a humble, peaceful king. What does this choice reveal about the nature of His kingdom?

Examining Our Hearts (20 minutes)

4. **Misplaced Expectations:** The crowd shouted the right word ("Hosanna") but with the wrong expectations (political revolution). In what ways do we do the same thing today? What are we really asking for when we pray "Lord, save me"?

5. **From Hosanna to Crucify:** How could people go from shouting "Hosanna!" on Sunday to "Crucify Him!" by Friday? Have you ever experienced disillusionment with God when He didn't meet your expectations? Share if you're comfortable.

6. **Two Lists:** The sermon contrasted what we want Jesus to do versus what He actually calls us to do:

- **We want:** Quick fixes, confirmation of our opinions, defeated enemies, no suffering
- **He calls us to:** Self-denial, loving enemies, confronting our sin, suffering for others

Which item on the "He calls us to" list is hardest for you personally? Why?

Going Deeper (15 minutes)

7. **The Todah Sacrifice:** The thanksgiving offering (todah) was given after God delivered someone from danger, accompanied by testimony and a shared meal. How does seeing Jesus as the ultimate todah offering change the way you approach communion?

8. **Judgment Begins at Home:** The sermon challenged us to examine our own temple before worrying about "Rome out there." What would it look like for your life, or for our church, to truly let the Spirit walk through and cleanse our temple?

9. **Refusing the World's Weapons:** Jesus refused to use the crowd's nationalist energy, resentment, or force to build His kingdom. How is the modern church tempted to build God's kingdom using the world's methods? What would it look like to resist that temptation?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

****Option 1: Pray Hosanna Authentically****

- Each day this week, pray "Hosanna" (Save me, please) as a genuine cry for help in a specific area of your life—not as a religious slogan, but as raw honesty with God.
- Journal about what you're truly asking to be saved from: Is it circumstances or sin? Discomfort or rebellion?

****Option 2: Examine Your Expectations****

- Write down your honest expectations of what you want Jesus to do in your life right now.
- Then read through the Gospels' accounts of Holy Week (Matthew 21-28, Mark 11-16, Luke 19-24, or John 12-21).
- Ask God to show you where your expectations need to align with His actual mission.

****Option 3: Temple Cleansing****

- Before pointing out what's wrong "out there," invite the Holy Spirit to examine your own heart.
- Ask: "Where have I tried to recruit Jesus for my agenda instead of surrendering to His?"
- Take one concrete step toward integrity in an area He reveals.

****Option 4: Share Your Todah****

- The todah sacrifice included testimony—telling others how God delivered you.
- Share your salvation story or a story of God's deliverance with someone this week (a friend, family member, or in your small group).

Reflection Exercise (10 minutes)

Silent Reflection:

Picture yourself in the crowd on that road from the Mount of Olives. Jesus is approaching on the donkey. The crowd is shouting. Palm branches are waving.

- What are you hoping He will do?
- When you shout "Hosanna," what are you really asking for?
- Are you willing to receive Him as He truly is—the meek King, the sacrificial Lamb, the One who saves on His terms, not yours?

Written Response:

Complete this sentence in your journal or on a notecard:

"Lord Jesus, I've been asking You to save me from _____, but I think You're actually calling me to _____. Help me to say 'Hosanna' and mean it—on Your terms, by Your cross, for Your glory."

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

****Group Prayer Focus:****

- Pray for honest hearts that can say "Hosanna" as a real cry for help, not a slogan
- Pray for surrender to Jesus' way of building His kingdom—through humility, sacrifice, and the cross
- Pray for our church to examine its own temple before criticizing the culture around us
- Pray for grace to receive Jesus as He is, not as we wish He would be

****Closing Benediction:****

"The Lord is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey. He comes not with the world's weapons but with the cross. He saves—on His terms, by His sacrifice, for His glory. May we have eyes to see Him and hearts to receive Him. Amen."

Looking Ahead

This week is Holy Week. Consider attending Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services if your church offers them. Walk through the whole story from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, allowing the weight of Christ's journey to the cross to transform your understanding of what "Hosanna" truly means.

****Next Week:**** Resurrection Sunday - The answer to our "Hosanna" cry