

Live Your Hosanna!

I. Imitate the Attitude

II. Shout out the Praise

Dear fans,

So, are you keeping up with your brackets? They say 58 million people in our country have filled out their predictions for this college basketball tournament that's going on. You may have heard of it. It's all over the place. In fact, I'm guessing that if you went out and played the word association game with a sample population of our country, and you said the name of the month we are in – "March" – I'm just guessing, but you'd probably get a pretty big majority of people responding with the word "Madness".

And if you've watched any of the fans at any of the games – you can see why they call it "Madness". Even sitting at home watching the games – how many of you haven't been heard shouting out once or twice? "Wow!" "Yes" "Hey honey, you've got to see this." I know, she doesn't really have to see it, but there's just something about that excitement. And the fans at the games are even crazier – they are waving their signs, they are clapping their hands, pumping their fists; they are screaming their cheers – telling everyone who they are – who their team is – and what they are doing.

Here's where I'm going with this. Think about this Sunday in the church year. Think about the Gospel lesson. Really, here at church today, here in our text: Welcome to March Madness – God-style. But what all the commotion is about here – is not some meaningless basketball game - as much as it pains this basketball fan to say it – the march madness about this basketball tournament is about something that really doesn't matter. But March Madness God-style is about something that truly makes a difference, a big difference, an eternal difference.

We're not yelling out "Go Tech" or cheering for some athletes. This Sunday in the church year highlights that cheer that we sing so often but we really see it applied fully in our gospel lesson and get to shout it out today ourselves: Hosanna! Hosanna to the king! And that word "Hosanna" is not just some arbitrary collection of syllables like "U Rah Rah." Hosanna is a word that would have been a major part of those people's religious vocabulary – it was one of those words that went with all their religious celebrations like our "Merry" goes with "Christmas" or "Hallelujah" goes with "Easter".

Hosanna is a Hebrew word made up of a couple of words. Real literally, it means "Save us, please" We saw it in the Psalm of the day we started our service with – a psalm that would have been engrained in the heads and hearts of those Israelites, a psalm that they sang, actually the climax of a set of Psalms that they sang at every major festival – a psalm that was frequently sung by those pilgrims whenever they made that trek to the city – they'd sing this when they got there. Even today – when I took that tour to Israel a couple years ago, our tour bus stopped and we got out and walked into the city to the words of this Psalm.

So when they cried out Hosanna – it was at the same time a shout of praise, but one that conveyed a message of what they are all about – a call to God for salvation – and really an acknowledgement that this is the One through whom it was coming! So, on Palm Sunday, as we see our Savior enter into Jerusalem to complete the work he came to do – we join in with them. We shout Hosanna! We wave our palm branches! We cheer for this king riding on a donkey.

And in our sermon text – we see the apostle Paul reminding us not just to shout our Hosanna. Don't just get caught up in the pomp and ceremony as so many of those first Palm Sunday revelers were. Don't allow your shout of "Hosanna" today to morph into "Crucify" by Friday, or the first time we're tempted. Today – our sermon text from God's Word tells you to "**Live your Hosanna!**"

We probably remember this text from Philippians for the beautiful hymn of praise it is to our Savior – the God-Man Christ Jesus. We remember it because it so beautifully and artfully and precisely describes these mind-boggling doctrines that Jesus is true God and true man at the same time and that in him somehow the impossible happened. God humbled himself. God died. The Man Christ Jesus is exalted above every power. All that is in there, but look at *why* Paul shares all this. All of this is in the context of Paul telling us to imitate Jesus: Verse 5 – "**Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus**". In other words, make your praise of him, your shout of "Hosanna" more than just words and some Palm branches. This is how you live your hosanna.

Notice, he doesn't tell us to do the same things Jesus did. That would be pretty impossible, seeing as he is God and we aren't. The very first words of Paul's description of him show that: "**being in very nature God.**" But what Paul tells us to do is just about as intimidating for our human nature. He tells us to **imitate the attitude** of Jesus as we live our hosannas.

Think about that – **“Being in very nature God, he did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.”** In our Gospel Lesson, he showed a little of that divine nature, didn’t he? He told those disciples exactly where the donkey was and what the owner would say and how everything would happen. He is true God. But He put himself aside – his very essence, he didn’t use it to his advantage. It’s interesting to note that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to use that word that means the very essence of something to describe Jesus as God, but words that mean “appearance” and a “form” taken to describe the true man Jesus. Jesus put aside who he truly is and was from eternity, for us.

Now imitate that! Humble yourselves. Think of how counter-cultural that is. Think of how contrary that is to our hearts. We don’t humble well until we are humbled. It’s in our nature. Whether it is saying you’re sorry and meaning it to your spouse or realizing that maybe your opinion of what color is best or what method is right isn’t the one that should be followed – we don’t naturally humble ourselves. Like the Proverb says, **“A man’s heart is proud.”** (Prov. 18:12) We don’t like backing down and all too often, we don’t humble ourselves until we are humbled.

At our last circuit meeting, we were talking about this concept and one of my brother pastors shared the story of Muhammad Ali, a man not known for his humility. Now, even Snopes didn’t know if this really happened, but supposedly, the great boxer was on an Eastern Airlines flight and told the flight attendant that asked him to buckle up: “Superman don’t need no seat belt.” To which she replied, “Superman don’t need no airplane either.” He buckled up.

It’s funny when we see someone else humbled, but not so funny when it is ourselves being humbled. But when we refuse to humble ourselves, well, then the Bible says we need to deal with God, the one who **“humbles the proud and exalts the humble”**. Whenever we stand up for our “rights” or demand our recognition, instead of sacrificing for others – whenever we excuse our actions because of who we think we are, not only have we not imitated the attitude of Jesus, but we’ve pushed our God away. Then our shout to God is not Hosanna, “Save Me!” but “Leave me alone!”

But God didn’t. Instead, **HE** humbled himself. In the Gospel Lesson we saw him riding in humility on that donkey, and, well our sermon text shows the next step: (Verse 8) **“Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.”** He didn’t get what he deserved, but what we did. He felt the terror of being left alone by God when he cried out, **“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me.”** And he IS God. That’s how far he emptied himself, humbled himself – to be the One, the only one that can receive that cry “Hosanna”.

And since he did save us, he empowers us to imitate his attitude as we live our hosannas – so that our praise will no longer be for ourselves, but we’ll realize that it’s all about Him, and we’ll shout Hosanna with our lives.

So live your hosanna, because Jesus didn’t stay humbled. He won the victory over our sins he took and now is back in His exalted position that he had set aside. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, so as we live this Hosanna, we’ll naturally shout the praise!

Verse 9 of our text starts with a “therefore.” You see, Jesus completed the task he rode into Jerusalem to do – to yasha us – to save us. Therefore – he gets exalted. He is God. He kept his word – we have to praise him for it. It’s natural to throw down our cloaks and anything else he wants. We have to present those palms and whatever else we have. We can’t help but get excited – more excited than those fans with painted bodies and hoarse voices at the basketball games. Think of what one of those crazy fans would do if the hero that hit the three-pointer at the buzzer to win went up to them and asked for \$1000 in exchange for his love, or much less, his jersey or his shoe. I’m pretty sure there would be people at the game willing to give him a kidney if he wanted it for goodness sake – and today we’re cheering for the One who came to save us from hell. Let’s live our Hosannas. Let’s put our lives where our love is.

The text says that “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the father.” One way or another we will be shouting his praise at the Last Day – so let’s enjoy the thrill of doing it now – celebrating his victory and sharing the news. Just like the fans can’t help but cheer, even high-fiving complete strangers – how can we not share the news of our victory with everyone?! Jesus came to save us – let’s shout that Hosanna for all to hear – inviting everyone friend and stranger alike to join us in this song. Good Friday and Easter Sunday worship are great places to start. Live your Hosanna. Share it.

In Christ,  
Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen.