

Dan Phillips: Hosannah, the Sermon

Sermon presented at Seekers worship

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by Dan Phillips

HOSANNAH, the Sermon

As I prepare to deliver this sermon, I must do something I do not like doing. I feel I must explain ahead-of-time what it is that I am presenting. This is a sermon and it is a poem.

Some of you know that I write poetry, and I wanted to share that part of me with all of you. This is an unusual poem for me, being probably the longest poem I have ever written. Poetry for me is the re-shaping of feelings and ideas through words. This poem contains what are for me new combinations of words and thoughts, gathered about one very passionate time.

As much as I like experimenting with written words, I also like trying out new spoken forms, new sermon types. Some people would tell you that sermons and poems are opposites: that poems are by definition open and changing, while sermons often attempt to be closed and immutable. However, we here, we Seekers, have often heard poetic sermons. I ask your support today as I combine these two different forms.

Please remember that the Gospel accounts of what we call **palm Sunday** or **passion Sunday** are very different. I have blended several stories that surround Jesus entry into Jerusalem into this one account. Those stories include JESUS CRYING OVER JERUSALEM, THE WOMAN ANOINTING JESUS' FEET, JESUS

RAISING LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD, JESUS SENDING HIS DISCIPLES FOR THE DONKEY and the TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM. As always, I have tried to be true both to the written accounts and to my own understanding of what God was doing in that place and time.

HOSANNAH

PRELUDE: CELEBRATION, ARE WE FOR OR AGAINST?

When your first miracle is turning water into wine

It is easier to preach

CELEBRATION.

Oh, we love the 'shuns

Creation, recreation, procreation,

CELEBRATION!

Make us happy Jesus

Make us happy and wealthy and wise and happy

And did I mention wealthy

And wise and rich

And happy

Make us Jesus

All the things we want to be

And did I mention wealthy?

Lead us into Party Jesus

Let the laughter and the wine mingle

May we have the fun of your light?

The joy of your presence

Make us happy

Let us celebrate your being

And our being

And all God's beings

And make us happy

And WEALTHY

ACT I: JESUS DECIDES TO GO TO JERUSALEM

What to pack

For a journey to Jerusalem

Do you pack extra clothes?

Do you have extra clothes?

Do you pack a whip for the moneychangers?

A palm frond

A blanket for a young donkey?

Do you pack handkerchiefs for the tears?

And a gift for Lazarus?

Exactly what do you get for the newly resurrected?

A photo album?

Deodorant!

You go

Because Jerusalem is there.

You go

Because Jerusalem needs you

You go

Because

It is not an accident that you go

It is not a bad travel choice

Or a mistake

Or even denial

You go like the rest of us go on living

Knowing that death is at the end of this journey

Knowing that pain awaits all forward movement

You go KNOWING.

We all **know** what lives in Jerusalem

Jerusalem of

Life, and society, and politics, and destiny.

We all know what

Jerusalem is like

We all fear Jerusalem

Jerusalem with its power, money and pressures

We all go to

Jerusalem once in our lives

If only to die.

The only real question we have to answer

Is whether we get there by accident

Or pack our bags and walk there

KNOWING

INTERLUDE: JESUS PREPARES FOR JERUSALEM

You sit at the feast

Afterwards Mary washes your feet

Rubbing them with sweet perfume

Drying them with sweet hair

Is the hair or the perfume sweeter?

Or her spirit

Such an intimate gesture of love

Is of course misunderstood

Your disciples grumble

WE COULD HAVE HAD MONEY

And you reply

ONLY MARY HAS GIVEN ME LOVE

We complain

WE COULD HAVE HAD MONEY

You whisper

ONLY MARY HAS GIVEN ME LOVE

You send your disciples for a donkey

Why do you do that?

You have always walked before

You have been in Jerusalem before

Why do you have to have

a donkey now?

Is it because that stupid woman

and her fancy perfume

Have made you believe you are even more special

Than we know you are?

Or do you just not want to walk on those

Perfumed feet?

And how do you know where the donkey will be

Did you plan all this

When have you had time to plan a donkey?

Are you sure the owner will give up his donkey

Why do I have to always go get the donkey?

ACT II: JESUS APPROACHES JERUSALEM

So you travel

Riding on that ridiculous donkey

Instead of walking as you always have

And as you begin to descend from the hills

The brown barren hills of Judea

Into Jerusalem

Jerusalem where

The crowds have already gathered

Where the common people

The hoi poloi

The masses have gathered,

They are always there

They have always been there

Already the common folk

The masses

The rabble

The mob

The crowd

They are shouting HOSANNAH

They shout and

They begin to praise you

HOSANNAH

Shout at you

HOSANNAH

Shout for you

HOSANNAH

They cut palm fronds and lay the fronds

And their own clothes

In the road for you

And they shout HOSANNAH

And call for you to become King

And kick out the Romans

HOSANNAH

And you have this impromptu

Celebration

This HOSANNAH TRIUMPH that even the Romans would recognize

This entry into Jerusalem as one exalted

And through it all

The constant

HOSANNAH

Whatever that means

INTERLUDE: JESUS PREPARES TO ENTER JERUSALEM

So why do you cry

When you get to Jerusalem

Jerusalem is the same city you knew

The same city you decided to go to

HOSANNAH

The same city you have been in before

And the people keep praising you

Yelling for you

HOSANNAH

Why are you crying?

I would have held you in my arms

I would have protected you like a mother hen

HOSANNAH

But you would not

Jerusalem

Jerusalem who stoned the prophets

HOSANNAH

How I wanted to

LOVE YOU

HOSANNAH

ACT III: JESUS ENTERS JERUSALEM

So you entered Jerusalem

HOSANNAH

Entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey

HOSANNAH

Crying about all the shouting people

Crying while the people shouted

HOSANNAH

They were shouting your name

HOSANNAH

While you were crying

HOSANNAH

Didn't you want to stop celebrating?

Didn't you stop celebrating?

HOSANNAH

We wanted to, we did stop

It was no great burden to us

HOSANNAH

When the Priests

The Pharisees

The HOSANNAH holy

Told you this was a HOSANNAH mob

Not quality HOSANNAH people

A HOSANNAH riot

Not a HOSANNAH Celebration.

But you

Wrapped in HOSANNAH wisdom

Gave a HOSANNAH answer

Gave HOSANNAH for an answer

If the people stop

If the HOSANNAH stops

The very rocks

Will cry HOSANNAH

Have you heard the rocks cry HOSANNAH?

They chant in deep tones
Too slow and constant and strong
For us to hear

The rocks themselves will
Must cry HOSANNAH
Today, we will sing HOSANNAH
And there is nothing in the HOSANNAH universe
That can stop HOSANNAH
TODAY

INTERLUDE: THE FIRST LESSON

We did not KNOW HOSANNAH as you knew
Where this HOSANNAH week would travel
What grave this HOSANNAH path would travel through

But later we would see
That HOSANNAH comes when it comes
It is not brought by plans
It does not stand on us
Or wait for us
We can celebrate or try to stop the shouting

But there will be HOSANNAH

And you Jesus

KNOWING what would happen

Joined the party

So when later HOSANNAH came

Carrying your spirit of fire

We were ready

For you taught us that HOSANNAH

Is a dance through the cemetery

The laughter that once every stone there felt

The happiness of not knowing when

HOSANNAH ends

The loud joyful funeral music

That is HOSANNAH

We understood HOSANNAH

If only for a while

MORAL OF THE PLAY:

So when YOU travel to Jerusalem

Jerusalem the place of energy, pain and fear

When you travel to Jerusalem

Jerusalem of all our futures

Shout HOSANNAH!

You will need HOSANNAH

You will need all the HOSANNAH

You can shout

ACT IV: JESUS LEAVES JERUSALEM

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

HOSANNAH!