

December 3, 2023 (Advent 1 B)

Mark 11:1-10

“Hosanna!”

Today we start another Church Year with the 1st Sunday of **Advent**. Most of our WELS churches follow the same lectionary – which has a rotation of 3 readings (the Old Testament / the New Testament / the Gospel) for each Sunday of the church year. That means, unless I change things up (which I sometimes do), every 9 years you will hear a sermon preached on the same text.

But here’s the thing – I’ve been a pastor now for over 21 years, and I’ve NEVER seen this Gospel Lesson come up for Advent 1. I was baffled by it. It’s the account of *Palm Sunday* from the Gospel of **Mark** – *and what on earth is it doing here on Advent 1?* I had to do some digging around in areas I hadn’t really thought much about since our *History of Worship* class at the Seminary.

The history of the church-year lectionary goes all the way back to the 7th Century – and – in the 8th Century theologians under King Charlemagne picked *this Palm Sunday* text for Advent 1. There it stood for centuries, until the Middle Ages where some changes were made and it disappeared. Then – under Martin Luther and the reformers they decided to bring it back again in the 16th Century. This lesson stayed there on Advent 1 all the way up to around the 1960’s where Lutherans made some changes to the lectionary again – and it got replaced with a different Gospel lesson for this Sunday. Well . . . we just switched to the new CW21 hymnal this year – and *presto* – **Mark 11:1-10** is back again on Advent 1!

It's not a mistake (as I first thought) – it has a LONG history behind it. I’ll read it for you and see if you can catch the connection to ADVENT – the season of waiting and watchfulness / the season of hope and anticipation – as we look forward to Jesus’ First Coming at Christmas, and His Second Coming at the End of all things: **Mark 11:1–10** (NIV)

11 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, 2 saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 3 If anyone asks you,

‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’ ”

4 They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, 5 some people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” 6 They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. 7 When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. 8 Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. 9 Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, “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 heaven!”

The crowds of people who loved Jesus were flocking to see Him and super excited to welcome Him to Jerusalem at the beginning of Holy Week. They believed He *was God’s Messiah* and they shouted **Hosanna – Lord Save us, NOW!** This was all in fulfillment of **Zechariah’s prophecy** about this event. The welcomed the King of kings – who entered Jerusalem in humility and lowliness – a gentle King who was nothing like any other king.

And yet – even while clothed in humility He gave glimpses of His Divine power and glory. He knew *exactly* how it would all play out – and *exactly* where the colt was tied up – and *exactly* what to say – and *exactly* what would happen next – and *exactly* what the crowds would shout when (whether they knew it or not) the people were doing *exactly* what the prophet wrote down under inspiration of the Holy Spirit some 500 years earlier.

He was coming to SAVE THEM – and not only them, but all of us too – people all across time who trust in Him and receive God’s grace, mercy, forgiveness, and salvation through His bloody sacrifice of Atonement as the Lamb of God who paid the ultimate price to rescue sinners from eternal damnation.

And here we gather, some 2,000 years later – also shouting HOSANNA and eager for Him to come and **save us** from this world that’s descending into chaos and swirling that drain that leads down to hell. They knew He was the Promised Messiah – coming in the Name of the Lord to save us . . . and *we know* He is the Promised Messiah coming to save us. They had all sorts of mixed-up ideas about what He would do and *how* He would accomplish it. People today have all sorts of mixed-up ideas about what He is going to do and *how* He is

going to accomplish it. They thought He was coming to establish an *earthly kingdom in Jerusalem* and Christians today think He's coming to establish and *earthly kingdom based in Jerusalem*. As we're seeing in our **Revelation** class, I truly believe we are blessed to have a clearer understanding of His Kingdom and of the events of End Times, along with a more accurate interpretation of the book of Revelation. Nevertheless, in reality – we truly have no idea when He's coming again, and we truly have no idea exactly WHAT it's going to look like and the scope of what He's going to accomplish when the same KING returns in glory with all His angels to judge the living and the dead and usher in the final stage of human history. Bottom line: *We know He's coming again to **save us** – and we're excited for Him to come and we joyfully sing **Hosanna** along with those crowds on Palm Sunday.*

My question for you today is this: *Where are **you** in that crowd of people?* Are you up front – filled with JOY and excitement and eager anticipation / fearlessly praising Him while His enemies lurk in the shadows / willingly sacrificing your possessions and working feverishly to “cut down the palm branches” so you can honor your glorious King who is coming to save you . . . **or** . . . are you standing back a ways? Maybe you don't want Him to look directly at you because your heart is weighed down with shame and guilt and you don't want Him to see what you've done. Maybe you've just become spiritually lazy and complacent and become so wrapped up in earthly things that you don't really have the time and energy to get excited about Jesus' coming. Maybe your heart is filled with worry and fear about global events, trouble in your family, and difficulties in your life – and you're questioning a bit in your heart if this King really is in charge of all things – because it certainly doesn't LOOK like it.

All the doubts and fears and worries and guilt and shame and insecurities and uncertainties that fill our hearts is **WHY** He came the **first time** – to save us. He knows us and He sees right through us. And yet, He **LOVES** us anyways. He shed His Blood and died to purify our hearts and souls. He rose again and says to each one of us unworthy sinners: *“Peace be with you. I love you. I forgive you. I want you – with me, in glory for all eternity. It's all fully accomplished and it's already yours by grace and through faith. You have nothing to worry about because I am coming to **save** you – not to*

condemn you, because you are my baptized, redeemed, and beloved child for all eternity.”

A dear Christian friend told me a few days ago that she believes in Jesus and trusts Him as her Savior – but she really just wants to **feel it** in her heart and experience that JOY in her spirit. I think we all want that. **THIS** is how you get it:

- Spend time with your King in His House.
- Listen to your King as He speaks in God's Word.
- Watch your King as we follow Him through the church year from Advent to Christmas to Epiphany and through Lent to Easter all over again.

When we have our eyes squarely focused on HIM (as opposed to focusing on ourselves) we'll naturally move to the front of that crowd as we're nudged along by the Holy Spirit. We've move from being among the curious and the sceptical toward the front of the crowd and stand with those who are joyful and hopeful / eager and excited / willing to fearlessly praise and generously sacrifice whatever we can to bring glory and honor to our King. **HOSANNA** will fly from our lips as we pray: *Come Lord Jesus – **SAVE** your people, and bring us all home! Amen.*