

Palm Sunday reflection

In 2020 I had the idea that for my each of Holy week addresses I would focus on one significant word. Back in 2020 I had already come up with the words I wanted to use, but, as things turned out, I didn't get to write the addresses then. Ideas like that don't go away so today on Palm Sunday I have my first word - Hosanna

Hosanna, it is what the crowd shouted at Jesus entry into Jerusalem. 'Hark all the crowds Hosanna cry' and 'To who the lips of Children made sweet hosannas ring' is what the hymns tell us.

In 2020 when I came up with the idea of focussing on particular words, we were in year A of the Lectionary cycle and the Gospel was Matthew. In Matthew we read that the crowd were shouting 'Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the Highest. And in Mark and John the shout hosanna but in Luke which is our Gospel this year the hosanna is missing Luke it is believe was writing his Gospel for a predominantly gentile community and throughout the Gospel he avoid words of semitic origin so Luke doesn't have 'Abba', 'Boanerges', 'Ephphatha' and sadly for us 'Hosanna' But not to worry all the gospel writers are basing the shouting of the crowd on Psalm 118 verses 25 and 26, 'Save us, we beseech you, O lord! O lord we beseech you give us success! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.' A psalm all about going up to Jerusalem in victory and triumph. But I can hear you ask, 'where is the Hosanna?' It's there but it has been translated. Hosanna is a Hebrew word, which is why Luke leaves it out, and in Hebrew, it means 'save us we beseech you' or even more forcefully 'Save now' hosanna isn't just a generic word of praise, the crowd aren't just shouting hooray, which is probably what Luke thought it meant. The crowd are calling for salvation, salvation such as when 200 years before Judas Maccabaeus had overcome King Antiochus entered Jerusalem, cleansed and rebuilt the temple, then the crowd had waved palm branches and sang Hymns of praise probably including psalm 118. A salvation that would sort out all their problems, sort out the Romans, sort out Herod, sort out their lives.

Jesus has come to answer that appeal for salvation, he has come as a King and Messiah. But not entirely in the way that the crowds expect. Yes, Jesus has come to save. This is going to be the great moment of salvation, but not salvation from the transient issues of history and society but the salvation that addresses the underlying issues of existence, the evils, natural and human, which seem to destine us for a relatively short and meaningless life.

Jesus as King will reign not from a throne but from a cross. As Messiah, God's anointed, he will fulfil his father will, not the desires of the mob.

Hosanna, 'save now' these shouts are fulfilled in Jesus the shouts were justified though not for the reasons the crowd thought.

So, as we sing Hosanna, can we see beyond it as a call for an imminent salvation that makes us feel better about the ups and downs of life to a call the transcendent salvation that is the eternal resurrection life.

Jesus through his crucifixion and resurrection fulfilled all that was require for our eternal salvation, he did so nearly 2000 years ago so if we are to cry Hosanna it is not a cry for God to act, he already has, but a cry that we will know and understand the salvation that we have received through Jesus. Amen

Ian Fisher