

Palm Sunday – 2026
Isaiah 50:4-9a
Philippians 2:5-11
John 12:12-19

Are there some people, today, who misunderstand the Lord Christ? Yes. Were there people who witnessed the Lord's Triumphant Entry in Jerusalem who misunderstood what they were witnessing? Yes. Why is that?

Do you believe that God communicates well – forcefully, clearly? Do you believe that the Gospel, just exactly as it has been recorded, has enriched your life? Do you credit your faith, your outlook on life and death, your sense of hope and a keen awareness of how divinely well-loved you are entirely to the Word of God? How is it that something so majestic and invigorating, something as supremely true and self-authenticating as God's Holy Word can be twisted by man, be shamelessly maligned and perverted and corrupted?

Jesus entered Jerusalem to the shouts of "Hosanna!" It was a messianic acclamation, "Hosanna!" It was verbal tickertape, "Hosanna." "Hosanna" means "save us!" A radically different shout was rising the following Friday. Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Why? Why this head-snapping reversal? It's true, man is fickle, but is that the real reason for this theological whiplash? It's true, the mob can be a tyrant. The Pharisees were the puppet-master, the mob was the marionette, and the Lord's militant antagonists pulled the mob's tyrannical strings. What keeps us from being part of the mob, throwing Jesus His flowers on Sunday and putting a crown of thorns on His head on Friday?

It's disconcerting. St. Paul writes these haunting lines to a young pastor named Timothy: "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths" (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Have you heard of Simon the Sorcerer? Simon practiced magic. This is in the book of Acts. He saw the miracles that the disciples were performing. He saw the power of the Holy Spirit coming on the people and he wanted the ability to command that power, so he offered the disciples money if they would give it to him (Acts 8:9-24). The witnesses who were brought to Jesus' trial *lied* (Matthew 26:59-61). The trial was a farcical charade. Justice was the last thing on the minds of those who sat in judgment of our Lord. The truth is abused. Unbelievers want to use Christianity as a way to make money or gain power. The Gospel is libeled with impunity. The Lord is crucified. It's all disconcerting.

We've been following the case of a Finnish Lutheran woman and her bishop since 2019. In 2004, Dr. Paivi Rasanen wrote a pamphlet entitled: "Male and Female He Created Them: Homosexual Relationships Challenge the Christian Understanding of Humanity." Her bishop, Rev. Juhana Pohjola, was the publisher. They were found guilty of "hate speech" or "inciting hate" by the Supreme Court of Finland this last week. Her pamphlet simply reiterated the Bible's words and called upon all who were living in a way that is contrary to God's will to

repent, assuring them of forgiveness in Christ. She is now branded an outlaw in Finland, and, by extension, the Word of God is outlawed in Finland. It's disconcerting. I've read of Christian pastors who actively supported slavery in the South during the Civil War era. I've read of theologians doing nothing to stanch the rise of the National Socialists in Hitler's Germany. It's all distilled to the mob crying out, "Crucify, crucify Him" (Luke 23:20-21).

As I recount all these disconcerting images, where are my eyes? As I verbalize all these disconcerting images, where have I drawn your eyes? What makes me a better man, what makes me a better pastor, is not looking at the world and its reckless, faithless, vice-loving, superficiality. What makes me a better man is looking at Christ, fixing my eyes on Him, understanding His purposes, trusting Him irrespective of what the temporary circumstances look like (Hebrews 12:1-2). It's not that I want to be blind to what's going on in the world, it's that Christ is bigger, Christ is more, Christ is truer and more enduring and my heart is to be filled with Him.

You have brothers and sisters in every era who have maintained their devotion to our living Lord. Across the seas of time, in every domain, the heart of faith beats true and strong and vibrant. Christ has built His church. He has orchestrated the events surrounding your salvation. He ruled in the midst of evil which sought to dethrone Him. It can't be done. The Lord Christ can't be dethroned. God's ways are deeper than man's ways (Isaiah 55). Hosanna! It was our Lord's absolute intent to save us. Those pilgrims shouted their words of acclimation aright! Hosanna! He set His face toward Jerusalem, toward the Holy Cross (Luke 9:51). On Good Friday, despite the chaotic cries of a mob, despite the injustice of Rome and despite the blood thirsty tyranny of the Pharisees, Jesus was in charge. The Father's plan was unfolding exactly as He intended. Ancient prophetic words were being realized – Jesus would save His people.

On one occasion, when there were disciples who were deserting our Lord, Jesus turned to the twelve and asked them if they too wanted to bail. "Do you want to go away as well?" (John 6:67). Simon Peter replied in a way that captures the heart of Christ the King Lutheran Church: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God" (John 6:68-69). The Lord has captured your heart, hasn't He? His Word speaks to you in a way that nothing else ever has or ever will, doesn't it? The world is chaotic. Our lives in Christ are stable. He rules even in the midst of chaos. We keep our eyes on Him. The world will continue to misunderstand Christ and His teaching. The world will continue to misrepresent our faith, belittle our faith, and slander our Lord. Our mothers and fathers have been through worse and remained steadfast. You treasure what He offers, what He provides. We are strong as we shout "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" (John 12:13). Christ the King makes His way to the apocalyptic tree. He is enthroned there. He reigns there. He gives up His life there. Seeing His glory, we bend the knee. Save us! Feed us with the bread of life!

Let us pray:

Keep us in Your grace, dear Lord. May we ever hold fast to Your Word, neither adding anything to it nor taking anything away from it. Help us to understand you properly. Bless us and direct our footsteps and govern us forever. Hosanna to the King of kings. Hosanna in the Highest.