

We have now heard of the week that is set before us... a week bookended by celebrations. And each celebration has something looming over it.

Can you feel it today on this first celebration, Palm Sunday? The Crowds shout “Hosanna” - “Save us Please.” But those cries are overshadowed by more than waving palm branches, they are overshadowed by deep, deep suffering and agony and death. The perennial question looms, “Did they know how he would save them?” If so would they be so celebratory? Or would they instead weep, or try to stop him. And how are we supposed to feel on this day? A celebration! The King comes to save, but it’s a high price, and one he doesn’t deserve to pay, we do. Should we weep, dare we try to stop him if we could?

But there is no stopping this plan of God. It isn’t fatalism, but it is a perfect plan, betrayal and lies will not stop it, neither will beatings, spit, shame, or soldiers. But this shadow is even darker than all this physical pain or emotional wounds inflicted by friends, it’s the condemnation of God and justice rolling down on the only one who deserved to be set free by it.

And so what do we do? Do we hold our joy and Hosannas, as if they gloat over this one doomed to die? Now, to be sure, there will be a time for somber reflection, there will be a time for stern preaching of the law, as we see when Jesus curses a fig tree that isn’t even to be expected to bear fruit – what of us, of whom fruit is required? Ah! That’s a stern teaching, and yes there will be time for it. There will be Thursday, Friday, Saturday - times for sackcloth, ashes, fasting, and mourning over what our Lord endured because of us and our sin.

But what about today? Should we withhold our hosannas? In Luke’s Gospel some people try to do just that. They try to stop the celebration happening today on Palm Sunday, they ask Jesus to

tell his followers to be quiet to stop shouting their hosannas. Jesus says, “If they were silent, the stones would cry out.”

Something is going to praise the Lord today, something is going to shout Hosanna! Something is going to shout Hosanna and recognize and praise the King coming to die, to fight, to save. Will it be you? Will it be you who know where Jesus is going? To a Cross? Will it be you who know that he won’t turn back and run, but will accomplish the plan of the Father to save you?

Jesus then teaches us that it is right to stand vigil this week, yes it is right to shout Hosanna to the King. Even the stones know that.

Because today God, the maker of the stones and us, comes to town. Today we confess we need a Savior, we need a King stronger than death and the devil, we need someone to do what we cannot, and there he is on a colt. This is his purpose. This is why he came. More than thirty years lead to this, more than that, God’s plan of salvation from the fall, where the offspring is promised to crush the devil, beyond that: before time, this, the unbegotten Son, would fulfill his course.

The angels wait with anticipation, will there be a command for them to rush in and stop the suffering? They’d listen if it was given. But they stand by, giving vigil. The Savior will not call upon them to fight. He fights this alone. He suffers alone.

Yes that suffering looms over us, this week. And doesn’t it loom over us everyday? Isn’t there suffering out there everyday? Isn’t there brokenness of body and mind and relationship? Isn’t there so much looming over us! Enough to make you want to shout in desperation, Hosanna, save us Lord, please!

This week we get our answer. He will save. Praise God.

And because he is the God of all, we know his work will *work* – he will win. We know that.

Which means that You, follower, believer in Jesus. You who are here at this overshadowed celebration at the beginning of this week. You will - and already are whether you feel it or not - You already are caught up in the celebration of the end of the week, Easter. For the first Easter has, obviously, already happened and we stand with the Church who celebrates that good news.

And yet ,we stand overshadowed. And we might think, like Palm Sunday, we are overshadowed again by darkness because there is plenty of suffering and pain still going around. But no! It is not suffering and death that loom over the celebration at the end of the week. No, the easter celebration at the end of the week, and we who live in this post easter days, we are not overshadowed by suffering and death that seems so apparent, we are overshadowed by a *joy* we cannot fully see.

With this celebration at the end of the week, as Jesus rises again, we see death, is dying. Justice is met. Sin is forgiven. A resurrection has occurred and strong promise has gone out. And that has happened. Which means that this celebration at the end of the week is going on even now, and we are overshadowed by the work and gifts and promises of a risen Savior which lead to something huge looming over us. Namely: YOUR resurrection!

We ask the palm Sunday Crowds, “did you know what he would do?” They could ask the same of us! “Do you know what he will do on that last day?” When he rights the wrongs, when he gives full healing and a reunion? When you witness the evil one cast down for good? What will that be like? When he makes all things new!? No eye has seen, no ear has heard.... Paul reminds us.

As death and suffering overshadow our celebration today, it is right to sign hosanna and praise to the King today, because he goes to save. Next Sunday, at that celebration, how much even more! For God's full and final victory overshadows that easter celebration.

In between may the Lord grant us repentance, and hearts and minds to meditate on his work, that we might with sincere hearts reflect, and give thanks for his work – work that saves, work that leads to such a beautiful day, that day is coming, we have seen a glimpse of it in Christ's victory over the grave. We know that day will come, it overshadows us, with promises of life and salvation, take heart, he will see us through this week, he will see us to that full and final celebration. God be praised. Amen.