

Palm Sunday Sermon, March 29, 2026

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In the days between Palm Sunday and Good Friday Jesus dashes everyone's expectations. On Palm Sunday the people shout, 'Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!' Later in the week the people shout, 'Crucify Him!' How did we go from shouts of "Hosanna!" to shouts of "Crucify Him!"?

Jesus processed in from the mount of olives, the place prophesied where the one who would save the people from their oppression would enter into Jerusalem. The Messiah would save the people from their oppressors, give them peace, and destroy their enemies: a king like David, a miracle worker like Moses. But Jesus rides in seated on a donkey – a mount that represented peace, he did not come riding a warhorse or even an old horse, he didn't even come on a large powerful looking donkey – he came in on a young donkey.

He came humbly, not performing miracles like Moses. He came offering peace not victory and glory, not a powerful warrior king like David. Jesus dashed everyone's expectations. When Jesus's Lordship was revealed be wildly different than what was expected I wonder if it was at this moment when 'Hosanna' began to turn to "Crucify him!"?

How does Jesus react to the change of reception, from shouts of praise to murderous screams? Jesus doesn't yell at the people, he doesn't send down curses upon them, no, rather, he continues steadily, faithfully to the cross.

On Palm Sunday, when we wanted a powerful Messiah, a political Messiah, when we wanted someone who would heal every illness, perform miracles, throw off the political oppressors with military might, it is this day when Jesus reminded us that his glory would not be in his miracles, what would change the world would not be his supernatural, political or military might, what would change the world would be his sacrifice.

On Palm Sunday Jesus says, 'no' to our expectations, but 'yes' to us.

'No' to our expectations of our desired Messiah God figure who solves all our woes in the manner we prefer. 'No' to any king but a Servant King 'No,' to a God who is like all the other gods, both ancient and modern who promise political power and economic success in exchange for devotion. 'Yes,' to us in meeting us in our upended expectations 'Yes,' to us in giving us what we truly need; redemption, reconciliation, a way to be whole again, a way to be in right relationship with our world, each other, our Creator and ourselves.

Thank God, the Messiah we expected on Palm Sunday is not the Messiah we encounter on Good Friday.