

Palm/Passion Sunday  
March 29, 2026  
Text: Psalm 118:19-29  
*"Hosanna!"*

*"This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."* What is this day made by the LORD for our joy and gladness? Well, it is complicated. Today is Palm Sunday, the day that Jesus and His disciples arrived in Jerusalem, as He had prophesied. Passover, the Jewish feast of salvation, was near. Waves of pilgrims poured into the city to celebrate Israel's birth as a nation and the LORD's deliverance through the Red Sea. Songs were in air; in fact, today's psalm was among those sung by the people. Psalm 118, a great song of thanksgiving and praise to God for His victory over enemies, is the last of a series of six hymns known as the Hallel psalms that were traditionally prayed by those coming to Jerusalem for Passover.

But the day of Jesus' arrival for this Passover was momentous. Those who met and welcomed Him into Holy City sensed it. News of the raising of Lazarus in nearby Bethany was on the lips of many. Messianic mania spread like wildfire, and the religious leaders among the Jews were on full alert. Jesus was carried on the back of a donkey in fulfillment of Zechariah's royal prophecy. The people stripped palm trees of their branches to create a victorious pathway for the Lord.

Then they took up a chant deeply rooted in two verses of Psalm 118: *"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel"* (John 12:13)! "Hosanna" is Hebrew for "Lord, save us." Now

compare the welcome of the people with verses 25 and 26 of the psalm. *“Save us, we pray, O LORD! O Lord, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD.”* Long before, God had spoken His Word, and now it was coming to be (Psalm 33:9). *“This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”* Oh yes, indeed!

But there is more. The coming of Jesus to Jerusalem was a true sign of the inauguration of His kingdom, though not in the manner expected by those who gathered to welcome Him. The Palm Sunday crowd’s fanfare fully convinced the religious leaders that they had to have Jesus killed lest He soon spearhead a popular revolt against Rome and plunge the whole nation into bloody chaos.

Unknown to Jesus’ enemies though, their conspiratorial efforts would help to fulfill the salvation promises of God. Though they would succeed in Jesus’ death, they would ultimately serve the higher will of God to save the world from sin and death. *“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”* By submitting to the evil will of His enemies, Jesus became our Great High Priest, who, by the offering of Himself on the cross, atoned for the sins of the whole world. *“The LORD is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us. Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar!”* In shining light of God, we see a salvation wonder: the promised festal sacrifice is Christ Himself, and the altar is His Golgotha cross. We thank you, Wise and Great Lord, that you have answered us and have become our salvation!

Jesus suffered and died on our behalf that He might clothe us in His own complete righteousness. Through faith in Him, we have peace with God, and freedom to approach Him as holy children and royal priests with mouths filled with thanks and praise. As we gather for all the services of this Holy Week, we can rejoice in our Dear Lord who has opened wide the gates of righteousness that we may enter through them and give thanks to God our Father. *“This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous [in Christ] shall enter through it.”*

One week from this great day, the Stone that builders rejected will rise up from death to take His rightful place as the Cornerstone of His Holy Church, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the Redeemed of the LORD. And we will revel in the resurrection victory of our Lord, the salvation that He has made ours' forever:

*You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;*

*you are my God; I will extol you.*

*Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;*

*for his steadfast love endures forever!*

Amen.