JM Jason Mayfield

SERMON OUTLINE FOR PASTORS

HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST

The Prayer You Pray When Nothing Else Works

> When you have done everything you can do and nothing has changed, take your case to the highest level of appeal. Cry "Hosanna in the highest": God is your refuge, your deliverer, and the King over all kings.

MAIN TEXT
Matthew 21:1-11

SERIES
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BY
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AT A GLANCE

THE MESSAGE

1. This message is for people who have already done everything in their capability and still see nothing changing, not for people who have not participated in the process.
2. Hosanna means God save us. It is a plea for mercy cried by people under occupation, economic pressure, corrupt religious leadership, and repeated disappointment.
3. God is a refuge. Refuge does not mean the circumstance changes. It means you are kept safe inside it while it is still happening.
4. God is a deliverer. He is able, capable, willing, and faithful to bring you out, and you do not have to accept the situation as permanent.
5. God is the King over all kings. Ephesians 1:22 says he was given as head over all things to the church, so Jesus is a resource who works on the believer's behalf.
6. Life becomes a series of appeals that eventually run out. Hosanna in the highest is taking the appeal past every human authority to the one they all answer to.



WATCH IT PREACHED

youtu.be/KKFoSwm1hfw



READ THE ARTICLE

jasonmayfield.com/messages/hosanna-in-the-highest

PREACHING NOTES

Before You Preach

This is a Palm Sunday message, one week before Easter. It answers one question: what do you do when you have done everything you can do and nothing has changed? Set the boundary early and with a smile. This message is not for the person who has done nothing and complains that nothing is changing. It is for the person who has cooperated, given, waited and prayed and still sees no change.

The first half teaches. It explains what the word Hosanna means and why the crowd on Palm Sunday was crying it out. The second half preaches what God does, not what we do. Pastor Jason said so plainly: he usually puts tools in people's hands, and this week he wanted to preach about what God does. Keep that turn. There is no homework in this message. There are three things God is.

The refuge point rests on a personal testimony: a childhood home where both parents were alcoholics, salvation at 12, and ten years in which nothing at home changed. Another preacher should tell his or her own story here, or tell this one as an illustration, and keep it honest without dwelling on details.

The appeal section used a current news story (a government shutdown and its effect on federal workers). Use whatever is current where you are; the point is that human systems of appeal break down.

Introduction

What do you do when you have done everything you can do and nothing has changed?

Make the distinction up front. This is not a message on what to do when you have done nothing that was in your power to do and you gripe that nothing has changed. If you have money problems and will not go get a job, the answer you need is not a prayer; it is a job. If you want a better marriage, stop creating a hostile environment at home. This message is for the person who has participated in the process and still sees nothing change.

The message is called "Hosanna in the Highest."

> MATTHEW 21:1-11 ESV
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> [1] Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, [2] saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. [3] If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." [4] This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, [5] "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" [6] The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. [7] They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. [8] Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. [9] And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" [10] And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" [11] And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

Pause at verse 3. The disciples were told to say, "The Lord needs them." Older translations say, "The Lord hath need of them." Easter is next Sunday, and the Lord has need of you. If you are not serving, test drive a team next week. Even if you never join a team, you can turn to six people near you and say, "Good morning, it's good to see you."

The branches the crowd cut and spread on the road were palm branches. That is why we call it Palm Sunday.

What Hosanna Means

Hosanna is a word we toss around without being sure what to do with it. Some will tell you it is just another name for Jesus. It is not.

Hosanna is a cry that means "God, save us." It comes from the Hebrew of Psalm 118, a psalm the pilgrims sang on their way up to the feasts: "Save us, we pray, O LORD!" (Psalm 118:25). It is a plea for God's mercy. When the crowd shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" (Matthew 21:9), they were saying, "God, save us. God, do something in our situation."

A People Under Pressure

It helps to know what was going on when they cried it out.

- **Occupation.** The Jews had lived under Roman rule for nearly a hundred years. In their own land they had become second-class citizens. In their own circles they were somebody; in the wider world they were nobody. Some of us know that feeling.
- **Economic pressure.** They were taxed by Rome, and they also paid the temple tax the law of Moses required. That tax had to be paid in an approved coin, so worshipers exchanged their money at the temple, and the money changers charged for the exchange. When Jesus overturned the money changers' tables (Matthew 21:12-13), this was not someone selling bracelets in the church foyer. It was a system that took advantage of people who were doing their best to give to the Lord. However spiritual you are, when

it keeps hitting your wallet, you feel it. Think of how Alabama feels about its power bill, then imagine that happening in the church foyer.

- **A cruel governor.** Pontius Pilate governed Judea for about ten years, and he made their lives miserable. Scripture remembers Galileans "whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices" (Luke 13:1).
- **Betrayed by their religious leaders.** The leaders who let the money changers in had made their peace with Rome so they could keep their position. The people felt betrayed by their own preachers.
- **Repeated disappointment.** Jesus is the Messiah. But He was not the first man the Jews hoped might be. Others had risen up and fallen, and the Book of Acts remembers two of them (Acts 5:36-37). They had thought they were on the verge of breakthrough, and it did not happen. The good news is that when you keep looking for God to move, you find His handiwork: they got Jesus.

So when Jesus says, "my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:30), hear it against everything they were already carrying.

Now they come to Passover. Jerusalem is crowded with pilgrims who have come to celebrate the night God delivered His people from Egypt and brought them through the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-31). Thousands of people are celebrating freedom from a tyrant and a system of oppression, in a city ruled by a tyrant and full of oppression. Jerusalem is a powder keg.

If you ever wondered how the crowd went from "Hosanna" to "Crucify him" in one week, it is because when tensions get hot, people make bad decisions.

Notice too that some did not even know who He was. When the city asked, "Who is this?" the crowd answered, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee" (Matthew 21:10-11). They were crying out, "God, save us," because they were in a situation beyond their control.

Hosanna in the Highest

Have you ever been there? You have done everything you can do. You went with the process. You cooperated. You were kind. You gave and gave and gave, and nothing changed.

That is when you look to heaven and you do not just say "Hosanna." This is not "thank You for the day, and put a hedge of protection around us." This is "God, I need You to show up in a way that transforms my life. I need You to do something I have never seen You do before." It is when you do not just cry out, "God, save me," but "God, save me in the highest fashion."

So today we are not talking about what you go do. We are talking about what God does. Here are three ways the Lord saves us.

1. He Is a Refuge

> **PSALM 46:1 ESV**
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> To the choirmaster. Of the Sons of Korah. According to Alamoth. A Song. [1] God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

He is our refuge. He is our strength. He is a very present help.

"The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe" (Proverbs 18:10). Churches used to sing that verse as a song. We sang Scripture, and people memorized verses without knowing they were verses.

Learn the names of the Lord, because sometimes you have to run in through a different door of the strong tower. Sometimes you run through the door of the Healer. Sometimes you run through the door of Jehovah Jireh, "The LORD will provide" (Genesis 22:14). Sometimes you run through the door of Jehovah Nissi, "The LORD Is My Banner" (Exodus 17:15).

There is always a gap. There will be seasons when you serve the Lord, call on Him to change things, and see no obvious change. At the bare minimum there is the time between calling on the Lord and seeing the answer. When Jesus told the royal official, "Go; your son will live" (John 4:50), the boy was healed that very hour, but the father still had to walk home before he knew. You are still living in the "I don't know" of the situation.

And there are times you call and call and nothing changes. We do not talk about this enough in the Pentecostal church. We talk about "now" and "it's your season," and there is something right about a now faith. We do not serve a "whatever will be, will be" God. We serve the God of the breakthrough. When David defeated the Philistines, he said, "The LORD has broken through my enemies before me like a breaking flood," and named the place Baal-perazim, which means *lord of breaking through* (2 Samuel 5:20).

Nevertheless, there will be seasons you walk through without knowing what is happening. Romans 8:28 says, "for those who love God all things work together for good." It does not say everything that happens is good. Some of you are agonizing over your adult children or your teenagers because God is not just changing it. Sometimes your children need to go through something so they have a testimony, so they know the difference between how it could be and how it is.

Illustration: Pastor Jason's daughter came home from a trip to New York and told her parents twice that she was grateful for them, because she had been around other parents. Until then, she had no contrast. Sometimes our kids need to see that it is not all sunshine and rainbows.

Illustration: nothing changed. Pastor Jason grew up in a home where both parents were alcoholics; both died early because of it. He was saved at 12 years old, and nothing changed at home. It got worse. Look at the first ten years of his walk with God and it looks like God never came through. Look at the thirty-year version and you see a great work God has done, not only through him and in him, but for him.

In those years the Lord taught him this: "I can be going through a situation, a bad situation, and I can be going through it, but because I'm full of the Holy Ghost and power, that situation doesn't have to go through me." Even though he was in it, it was not in him.

Refuge does not mean things change. Refuge means you are under attack and you are going through it, but if you get into the presence of the Lord, He will protect you. He will keep you safe. He will make sure that whatever happens to you does not happen in you.

We like breakthrough testimonies, the check in the mail and the life turned around. But there are moments when God is working and it seems like He is not. That is because He is a refuge. The righteous run into the

strong tower and they are safe. Not delivered yet. Safe. You are still going through it. You are still under attack. But you are safe.

2. He Is a Deliverer

God is not only a refuge. He is also a deliverer. God is able, capable, willing and faithful to bring you out of whatever you are in.

> **PSALM 144:2** ESV
>
> 2 he is my steadfast love and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield and he in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me.

Tell the story of Acts 12 rather than reading it. James has just been killed, and Peter is in prison. He has every reason to have no faith left. But the church is praying, and an angel comes and leads him out. It is so supernatural that Peter "thought he was seeing a vision" (Acts 12:9). That is deliverance.

Much of what gets called deliverance ministry today happens with people crying in a room and leaving the same. God is a deliverer, and we want to look around and say, "Look what the Lord has done. If He did it for them, He can do it for me." We want real power, authentic power, where God really moves.

Illustration: There was a season Pastor Jason had to live in it: not knowing what he was coming home to, not knowing whether someone would get hurt that night. Then came the moment the Lord said, "Now I am going to bring you out."

Hold the tension. On one hand, He is a refuge, so get into the Lord and be safe. On the other, keep your faith, keep calling on the Lord, and believe for your breakthrough. Too many in the church have learned to accept everything as "just the way it is" and to treat horrific things as a gift. You can get something good out of anything, but you do not have to stay there. You do not have to be broke forever, in danger forever, abused forever or sick forever. There is a moment of breakthrough when God will bring you out.

Say it: "God, I receive it today."

3. He Is the King Over All Kings

He is a refuge. He is a deliverer. And He is the King over all kings.

> **EPHESIANS 1:22** ESV
>
> 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,

We usually read this as "Jesus is the head of the church," and He is. But the verse says more: He is head over all things, and He has been given to the church. Jesus is a resource for the believer.

Life becomes a series of appeals. When you cannot solve something, you appeal. "Can I speak to your manager?" You write your congressman. You go over your supervisor to the vice president. In a lot of homes,

if Dad says no, you go ask Mom. Your appeal might be sending out your resume, trying to refinance, or getting a second opinion.

The longer you live, the more you realize how little you are in charge. (Pastor Jason's example: hiring contractors to paint 6,000 square feet of ceiling black and having no control the whole time.)

Sometimes there is no appeal. A 13-year-old in a broken home has nowhere to go. Sometimes the appeals fail you: a grandparent who could step in and does not. If that is you, let the kingdom of God get into you and change something.

Appeal after appeal after appeal, and nothing changes. You talk to the supervisor, the manager, the regional manager, the vice president and the CEO, and nothing changes. You see your primary care doctor and the specialist and the next specialist, and you are not getting better. The woman with the issue of blood "had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse" (Mark 5:26). Appeal, appeal, appeal.

But He has been given as head over all things to the church. Jesus works on our behalf. He is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Revelation 5:5), and He will go to battle for you. When Stephen was stoned, he saw "Jesus standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55). Pastor Jason reads it this way: Jesus stood up, ready for action. He is ready to fight on your behalf, and every authority on the planet answers to Him.

Human appeal is broken. Business, government and every human system of appeal will fail somebody. Use a current example here.

The Highest Level of Appeal

We have a resource: "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will" (Proverbs 21:1). He is the highest authority. He is the highest level of appeal.

So when the crowd cried "Hosanna in the highest," they were not only saying, "God, save me." They were saying, "I'm going to your boss's boss's boss's boss. I'm going to the highest level of appeal. I'm going to call on the One who can actually change the situation."

Here is our problem: we do all our warfare on the ground level. A problem with your adult kids, a problem in your body, a problem at work: we try to fight it in the middle, and some of us fight it even lower, arguing on Facebook. But "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities" (Ephesians 6:12).

Conclusion

We have a God who is living, active and alive. He is risen from the dead. He is the King of kings. He is coming again. And in the meantime, He is answering the prayers of His people who look to Him and say, "Hosanna in the highest."

- He is a **refuge**: you are safe in Him even while it is happening.
- He is a **deliverer**: He is able and willing to bring you out.
- He is the **King over all kings**: the highest level of appeal.

He will work for you. When you get a no and a no and a no and a no, He will say yes. And when He says yes, it thunders through heaven and rolls through the earth, and everything in your world turns in your favor.

Close in praise.



ABOUT

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