

John 12:12-19

“Hosanna!” the crowd is crying, *“Save us now!”* This is a word, a cry for our day. *“Hosanna! Save us, Lord! Save us now!”* In every part of the world, people are crying out. It is very clear who, or what is the enemy. It is an invisible enemy. And yet, its destructive force is clearly visible. Sickness, isolation, death. Young or old, healthy or not, this enemy does not discriminate. It has set itself against all mankind. *“Hosanna! Save us from this enemy! Save us now!”*

But this is not where these people are. The crowd gathered around Jesus on Palm Sunday is not concerned about an invisible enemy, but one that is very much visible. Rome. Rome is their enemy because Caesar has the rule over them.

But Jesus is not interested in saving them from Rome. He has not come to battle against earthly rulers and kingdoms. He is not riding into Jerusalem on a horse readied for war. He rides a beast of burden, a donkey. He does not come aggressively, but peacefully.

Is Jesus interested in our invisible enemy? He did heal the sick. He did stop viruses. He raised the dead. Yes, He is interested in our invisible enemy, but not the one we may have in mind. Even before He was born, it was said of Him, *“He will save His people from their sins.”* This is why He has come. Sin is the invisible enemy against which Jesus battles.

But although invisible, its destructive force is clearly visible. Sin has brought sickness and disease into the world. Sin isolates us from God and from each other. And sin results in death. Young or old, healthy or not, sin does not discriminate. It has infected all mankind including you and me.

So how does one battle against such an invisible enemy? Jesus carries no sword or spear. He wears no helmet or shield. There is only one way for Him to win the war with sin. He must go to the cross and die as the sinner in our place.

There is a senior care facility in our county that has a sign out front saying that “heroes work here.” And they are right. To care for these residents, a number of them testing positive for the virus, and some of them having died from it, is truly heroic work. Still, the staff does wear protective gear, as they should, to protect themselves from the virus.

Jesus wore nothing of the kind. Just the opposite. He came into our sin-infected world for the very purpose of carrying our sin in His own body and suffering the penalty of death. It would be like someone walking through every city, every country, every place where people are dying from the virus, coming up to each one and, if it was possible, taking the virus away from them all and into himself.

Not only is this possible. It is already done. You and I are infected with sin. And sin exposes itself with symptoms that vary from sinner to sinner. Cain murdered his brother Abel. David committed adultery with Bathsheba. The malefactor on the cross was a thief. Jesus came, not to avoid such sinners, but to carry their very sins. He was charged with Cain’s murder. He was

guilty of David's adultery. He became the thief in place of the man, yes the men, dying next to Him.

And also for you, my friend. There is no sin in your life that Jesus refused to carry in His body. What have you done that frightens you? What is the sin in your past that is eating away at you? In God's eyes, you are not guilty of that sin. Jesus is. He became the sinner that you are. He went to the cross, and He suffered the penalty you and I deserve.

It is done. "*It is finished!*" Jesus cried. "Hosanna! Save us now!" He did. He has saved you from your sins. God forgives you. Every sin in your life is forgiven. It matters not how bad the sin or how wretched the sinner. Jesus bore the sins of all. He bore your sins, too. You are forgiven.

On Palm Sunday the people came out because of the sign of Lazarus, raised from the dead by Jesus. God gives you an even greater sign: your baptism into Christ's death and resurrection. This sign is a pledge from God to you that your sins are washed away; that you are and remain God's forgiven child in Jesus Christ.

Yet, "Lord," we cry, "Hosanna! What about this pandemic? Save us from this!" "*He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also graciously give us all things?*" Is not this God's promise to you? Is He not fully aware of what is now taking place? This pandemic is but a symptom. This world is dying. It has been dying since sin entered in. Is not God teaching us through what is now happening? "*Do not fear those (or that) which can kill the body.*"

Whether things get better or worse...rejoice. Jesus rode on to the cross to suffer, die, and rise again for you. Where you are going there are no pandemics, no sickness, no sin, no death. On this Palm Sunday let the palm branches teach you that an oasis awaits you. Your journey through this sin-infected life is temporary. Your true home in heaven is the oasis on the horizon. It's no mirage. It is very real, and it's yours in Christ Jesus. Amen.