

Today is Palm Sunday, the day commemorating Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It is the day we sing and shout, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" The word for Palm Sunday is "Hosanna!"

The English word "hosanna" comes from the Greek word "hosanna (ὡσαννά)." This Greek word "hosanna (ὡσαννά)" is from the Hebrew phrase "hoshiya na (הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא)" which means, "Save me!" It is a cry to God for help. Like when somebody pushes us off the diving board before we can swim, and we come up hollering: "Help me! Save me! *Hoshiya na* (הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא)!"

The meaning of the word "Hosanna" has been changed over the years. In Psalm 118:26, "Hosanna" was immediately followed by the exclamation: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" The cry for help, *hoshiya na* (הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא), was answered almost before it came out of the psalmist's mouth. And over the centuries, the phrase *hoshiya na* (הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא) stopped being a cry for help in the ordinary language of the Jews. Instead, it became a shout of hope and exultation. It used to mean, "Save me!" But gradually, it came to mean, "Salvation! Salvation has come!"

It used to be what we would say when we fell off the diving board. But it came to be what we would say when we see the lifeguard coming to save us! It is the bubbling over of a heart that sees hope, joy, and salvation on the way. And, we cannot keep it within ourselves.

So "Hosanna!" means, "Hooray for salvation! It's coming! It's here! Salvation is here!" "Hosanna to the Son of David!" in verse 9 of today's scripture means, "The Son of David, Jesus, is our salvation! Hooray for the king! Salvation belongs to the king!" And "Hosanna in the highest!" means, "Let all the angels in heaven join the song of praise. Salvation! Salvation! Let the highest heaven sing the song!" The word "Hosanna" moved from plea to praise, from cry to confidence. The Son of David, Jesus, has come to save us from guilt, fear, and hopelessness.

According to Matthew's Gospel, the first thing that Jesus did when He entered Jerusalem for His passion journey to the Cross was cleaning up the temple, the

house of the Lord. Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 states that we are God's temple.

Unfortunately, we, God's temple, got stained or contaminated by sin like the temple in Jerusalem. This sin is more than just a superficial account of our wrongdoings. Sin sinks deep into our innermost being, affecting how we think, act, feel, and relate to others. This is the definition of sin in the "Cleansing Atonement" of our Savior upon the Cross. Jesus comes to clean us. He cleanses us of our sins by taking sin upon Himself. In the biblical term, Jesus becomes our "scapegoat" as our Savior upon the Cross. In "Sunny's terminology," Jesus is our "Stain Remover."

Now, if there's something that I know about, it's stains. I cannot tell you how many times I have ruined shirts just by eating supper. I am sure many of you know about stains also. Let's say that we're going about our day, and all of a sudden, we realize that we've got a stain in our life. What's the first thing we do? Well, we pretend it's not there, don't we? We walk around and pretend as no one can see it. "Hey, how are you doing?" "I'm doing good. I'm fine. I don't have a stain in my life. I don't know what you are talking about. You must be talking about somebody else. I wasn't going to mention it, but I noticed that John had a big stain on his shirt. Somebody should tell him about that." There we are, pretending that we don't have a stain in our life but others when the Bible says that our stains are shining like scarlet, red as crimson (Isaiah 1:18). It's obvious to us and to God, and to everyone around us.

And then, when we find out that everyone can see our stain, we start trying to pass the buck. "Yeah, I know that stain's there, but I didn't put it there. It was Scott. He was over there eating and got sloppy and spilled some of his food on me. Or, I was driving to work and hit a bump, and my coffee spilled. It's not my fault. It's the road's fault. They really ought to fix that pothole over there."

And then, when it's obvious that no one is buying that, what do we do? We try to cover it up. We go out and buy ourselves a patch and make a design and put it over that stain and try to convince ourselves that our stain is gone forever. Out of sight, out of mind! Just cover it up, and we don't have to worry about it anymore.

But we know none of that works. It didn't work for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. And it won't work for us. That's not how we get rid of a stain. We can pretend it's not there. We can blame someone else for it. We can cover it up. But

that will not make the stain go away. It doesn't matter what we try; we cannot get rid of it.

People around us might not see it, but that doesn't make it go away. In those quiet moments of our lives, when we're honest with ourselves, we have to look in the mirror and admit that we've got a stain. No matter what we do, it will not go away. We can cover up that stain and hide it from the whole world, but we know what's hidden in the recesses of our soul. We know how stained and ruined our hearts are. The question is, "What do we do about it?"

It doesn't matter how big or small the stain we have in our lives. Stain is stain. Unless we acknowledge that we have a stain in life, we have no need for salvation or Savior—the Stain Remover! King David in Psalm 51 invites us to a preemptive confessional: to confess the stain of our sins, even before our sins come to light.

"Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me" (Psalm 51: 2, 7, 10, NRSV).

Whenever we see the word "heart" in the Bible, know that the ancient Israelites understood the heart as the seat of intelligence and emotion, the core of one's being. King David did not just ask for a change in his feelings, but a complete reboot of his values, perspective, and behavior. When King David confessed his sins, God graciously forgave him and helped him to make things right.

And so it is with Jesus, whose work on the Cross is the "hyssop," "the Stain Remover," that not only cleanses us of our sins. It creates a brand-new heart and orients us within a whole new life.

The first thing that Jesus did when He entered Jerusalem for the passion journey is cleaning God's temple to transform "Hosanna of cry" to "Hosanna of praise." Jesus wants to offer His cleansing power to us today also. Would you let Him with your confession? The choice is yours. Amen.