

## Loud Hosannas

Readings: Ps 118:1 – 2, 19 – 29, Mark 11:1 - 11

At Wensley House<sup>1</sup> the week before last, Shirley Jackson and I led a church service. The theme was 'fun'. As part of that we sang "Jesus loves me this I know" but we sang the elder's version. It is great fun. You probably know it. The first verse goes like this:

Jesus loves me, this I know,  
though my hair is white as snow.  
though my sight is growing dim,  
still He bids me trust in Him.

Sing the Chorus with me:

Yes Jesus loves me  
Yes Jesus loves me  
Yes Jesus loves me  
the Bible tells me so

The last verse of the song gave me a bit of a jolt though:

I love Jesus, does He know?  
Have I ever told Him so?  
Jesus loves to hear me say,  
That I love Him, every day.

I wonder if Jesus was comforted by the people's loud acclamation on the first Palm Sunday. They lay down their cloaks and hailed him as a great King. Was that an affirming experience for Jesus or did he know their love was really a fickle thing? Did he know it was all going to culminate in them rejecting him?

Of course Jesus knew; he talked about it quite openly about his coming death. Jesus knew full well the people feted him today but would turn against him very soon indeed.

One example of Jesus' prediction is the story of Judas whinging about the cost of the ointment Mary used to anoint Jesus' feet. Jesus replied

*"Leave her alone. She did this in preparation for my burial. You will always have the poor among you but you will not always have me."* John 12:7

Yesterday evening some of the youth group girls and I were talking. We touched briefly on love and the difference between conditional and unconditional love. Some of us offer love as a kind of barter system don't we? "If you ..... then I will love you. If you don't then, I am not obligated to love."

It's dodgy reasoning though; usually unconscious dodgy reasoning. We can't easily offer unconditional love because of our own woundedness.

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<sup>1</sup> A local rest home for the elderly in Richmond, Nelson, New Zealand

Jesus never offered anything but unconditional love. He'd do that through his life of unreserved love and through his undeserved death. Jesus was a King, but a king who came to serve others.

Most kings dominate out of self-interest and an attitude of self-serving. Jesus comes determined to serve. Most kings ride white stallions or fly in flash aeroplanes but King Jesus deliberately rides a donkey. He knew he was fulfilling prophecy in choosing a mount<sup>2</sup> that a child or infirm person might ride.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus was nothing like the Jewish people expected. Jesus is described as a lion and a lamb in the book of Revelations.

Revelation 5:5 – 6

*Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.' Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the centre of the throne.*

Jonathan Edwards comments on the fact that the apostle John was looking for a Lion but found a slain lamb instead:

The lion excels in strength and in the majesty of his appearance and voice. The lamb excels in meekness and patience ... is [sacrificed] for food ... and ... clothing. But we see that Christ is in the text compared to both, because the diverse excellencies of both wonderfully meet in him...<sup>4</sup>

Brendan Manning gives several examples of Jesus' emotions in his book, A Glimpse of Jesus<sup>5</sup>, including grief, frustration and sadness all mixed together as he weeps over Jerusalem in Luke 19:41 – 42.

*As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it 42 and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.*

Jesus was loved and hated. Though the hatred grew, Jesus wasn't going to be influenced by that. His inner well-being came from the deep love he experienced in his Father. That was always what enabled him to be about his Father's business.<sup>6</sup>

One of the things I love about Jesus is the fact that he felt every emotion that we do.<sup>7</sup> He expressed those emotions freely – there was no thought of whether or not someone might be offended or misunderstand.

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<sup>2</sup> The Greek word is 'polos' meaning colt or small donkey.

<sup>3</sup> Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

<sup>4</sup> 'The excellency of Jesus Christ' in The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards, quoted by Tim Keller in King's Cross 155

<sup>5</sup> A glimpse of Jesus: A stranger to self-hatred 105 – 106. Manning uses the same examples in another book he has written; Abba's Child: The cry of the heart for intimate belonging.

<sup>6</sup> John 5:19 "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."

Jesus was human and enjoyed it when he was loved and cared for. But he knew that love was often conditional. He never depended on that love or approval and refused to conform to others' expectations.

The apostle Paul followed Jesus in this perspective and urged his writers to act in the same way:

*Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Romans 12:2*

Others try to make us conform and live up to their expectations. But they can only do that if we allow them, consciously or unconsciously, to have power over us. We can choose to follow the upside-down way of Jesus and to be the people we are created to be, working with Jesus' in his Father's mission, in the way that only we can.

Let's look at the last verse in our Gospel reading. After the procession was over:

*Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve. Verse 11*

Can you see the temple through Jesus' eyes at this point? He has just come from being hailed as King of the Jews. With their lips the people have blessed him as the one who comes in the Name of the Lord (verses 9 and 10). Yet in the temple – same old, same old.

Jesus didn't give any weight to the people's cheers during the parade. He knew that in the temple it was business as usual. Most likely his heart was heavy; he knew nothing had changed; not really. People were still focused on doing their own thing. Their love for him was totally conditional on him rescuing them from the Romans.

And yet, he would awake the next morning to continue on with his Father's business of bringing the Kingdom of God to earth.<sup>8</sup>

Jean reminded us last week of three things about Jesus<sup>9</sup>:

1. He was the Son of Man who came to live and die in total obedience to His Father's will.
2. He is the Lamb who was slain whose victory over evil came not by force of arms but by the cross.
3. He is the one who call us to follow Him by choosing to serve Him even when it means dying to our own selfish desires.

Today we have remembered the depth of his love for his Father and for us. We've considered how he refused to be influenced by the conditional love of others.

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<sup>7</sup> John 11:33

<sup>8</sup> He would cleanse the temple

<sup>9</sup> You can listen to or read this excellent sermon at

[www.holytrinityrichmond.org.nz/mod/news/group.php?category\\_id=1](http://www.holytrinityrichmond.org.nz/mod/news/group.php?category_id=1)

Remember the song we sang at the beginning: Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so?

Jesus rode into Jerusalem, to his death, in order that we might live. Jesus love for us is completely unconditional in the here and now too. He knows us intimately – our weaknesses, pettiness, selfishness, love of comfort, our need for approval – he knows it all. None of those things will ever exclude us from his love.<sup>10</sup>

Brennan Manning imagines Jesus' words:

“Come to me. Come now. Don't wait until you have your act cleaned up and your head on straight. Don't delay until you think you are properly disposed and free of pride, lust, jealousy and self-hatred. Come to me in your brokenness and sinfulness, with all your fears and insecurities, and I will comfort you right where you live and love you just the way you are, and not the way you think you should be.”<sup>11</sup>

When we experience that kind of love, we have no problem loving in return. Jesus loves to hear me say that I love him every day. More importantly he loves to see us live that out with our actions as well as words. Actions show what we really believe.

The most important action of all is to allow Jesus to love us; to receive the love he offers unconditionally. When we do that our loud hosannas will be genuine and lasting.

Let's pray:

We are so grateful that you love us Father God. Help us to receive that love and in turn to live it out. We pray this through Jesus Christ, the one who gave himself for us and who now lives for us, Amen .

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<sup>10</sup> Romans 8:31 – 39

<sup>11</sup> A glimpse of Jesus 36 Manning suggests Jesus' eyes spoke this love to the fallen woman who anointed his feet.