

**Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves.** <sup>13</sup> **“It is written,” he said to them, “‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it a ‘den of robbers.’”**

<sup>14</sup> **The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them.** <sup>15</sup> **But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they were indignant.**

<sup>16</sup> **“Do you hear what these children are saying?” they asked him.**

**“Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read,**

**“ ‘From the lips of children and infants  
you have ordained praise’?”**

<sup>17</sup> **And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.** (NIV84)

Theme: Irony of the Passion: Do you hear what these children are saying?

If you are a parent, you’ve been there before: your children correcting for you doing something wrong, for not practicing what you preached and doing the exact opposite of what you told them to do. You told your children to only say nice things each other, but they caught you making fun of someone behind their back and your oldest called you out on it. You tell them not to fight; but they heard the argument you were having with your spouse the other night that got a little heated and they came in and asked you to be nice to each other. You tell them that God’s Word is important—the most important thing in our lives, but they notice when you don’t go to worship or bring them to Sunday School because there are other things to do that may seem more important. And at times they have to remind you or even ask you to go to Church.

In Luke 18 Jesus lifts up the faith of children as the model for every Christian to follow, **I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive**

**the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.** Children often do what they are told to do; they believe what you tell them, they don’t question, they don’t doubt as much, their own wants and desires are pushed away for God and his will. Although they may be small and young, their faith is often larger than our own faith. Today we take a look at yet another ironic statement of Christ’s Passion—this one by the Jewish leaders as they said in astonishment to Jesus, **Do you hear what these children are saying?**

Today, of course, is Palm Sunday. The day Jesus took a colt—a foal of a donkey, a beast of burden, on which no one had ever ridden, an untamed animal—and he rode on it into Jerusalem. We call this his Triumphal entry, but even then, Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem was humble one. The people celebrated him and acted as if he were their king, yet he didn’t ride into the Capital on a stately, powerful, war-horse or in a chariot, but on a lowly donkey. That is why in the second and fifth stanzas of the hymn “Ride on, Ride on in Majesty” which we’ll sing to close the service, we describe Jesus’ entry as one of “lowly pomp.”

He may have been lowly, but the people still celebrated. Many threw down coats in front of Jesus. Others ran into the fields and up the trees and cut down branches, laying them on the ground and waving them before him. This is how the people greeted kings; in a way they were pulling out the red carpet for Jesus. And they sang his praises. Matthew records, **Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!**

The celebration continued the next morning, when our text for today takes place. That morning, in the temple Jesus drove out the merchants selling animals for sacrifices and overturned the tables of the money changers because they were making God’s house into a market place, robbing the people by charging exorbitant prices, and robbing God and his temple of glory by prohibiting worship and prayer to him.

What Jesus did obviously upset the Jewish leaders, who were in charge of the Temple worship. But not the people—they brought the blind and the lame to Jesus so that he could heal them. The children seeing the miracles that Jesus performed and remembering the songs of praise from the day before, repeated them and said to him, **Hosanna to the**

**Son of David.** Hosanna was a word used as a song of praise and literally means, “Save us, please.” And they were singing this word to Jesus!

So the chief priests and the scribes came up to Jesus and said, **Do you hear what these children are saying?** There is more than a hint of unbelief in these words. They were saying, “Don’t you hear the children singing praises to you? You’re obviously not the Lord; why aren’t you stopping them?”

The chief priests who were in charge of the Temple worship, and the Scribes who were experts in the law and who wrote down God’s Word again and again; they should have known better. They knew the words of Scripture. They heard Jesus preach and teach God’s Word; they heard about his miracles and they were eye witnesses when he healed the blind and the crippled. The children in the temple that day put two-and-two together and confessed their faith in Jesus as their savior. The Jewish leaders saw and heard the same thing; they have known better, but they rejected Christ, they rejected the gospel. Their selfishness had blinded them to the truth; no matter what Jesus said or did they wouldn’t believe because they had already made up their mind to reject Jesus.

The children knew theology better than the theologians. That may sound strange, but it is the case still today. There are many mock and ridicule Christians who take God at his Word as foolish and gullible. The sad reality of the Christian church today is that a large number of pastors and professors do not even believe that Jesus is our Savior who died and rose to give us eternal life. They don’t claim that God came in the flesh to pay for our sins. They deny that God prophesied in the Old Testament that this Savior would appear. Why? They don’t see it because they don’t want to believe it. People today will believe almost anything. Reincarnation, evolution, that God talks to us through our feelings and emotions. But God coming down to earth to pay for our sins with his own blood so that we won’t go to hell—That, they reject! Why? Because that would mean God is a judge. That would mean there is an absolute standard of right and wrong that every person on earth must submit to or suffer the consequences. People in our society do not buy that. They think right and wrong really mean what’s best for them in any given situation. Eternal standards, absolute rules, and divine judgment—people today just won’t swallow that because it

would mean that some people are, in fact, wrong. It would mean that people are guilty and that they deserve to suffer in hell forever. In the same way; doubt creeps into our minds. We listen to our friends, science, and our own reason and logic and we wonder what, if any, part of God’s Word is true. Children, however have no problem believing God’s Word—all of it. They believe without any doubting that God created the world in six days, that he is true God and true man—born of the virgin Mary, come down to heaven to save us, and that he truly did rise from the dead three days after his death. We do well then to have a child-like faith, not doubting but firmly holding on to what God says in his Word and accepting it as truth.

Jesus knew full well what the children were saying. He heard their words and yet he didn’t stop them. Why? Because what they were saying was true—they were right in singing his praises and asking him to save them. Why? Because he is the Lord and our Savior! He wouldn’t stop them, if he would then the stones would cry out in his praises!

It is why he came down from heaven in the first place; this is why he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. No, not so that he could receive praises; not so that he could cleanse the temple once again; but so that he suffer and die in our place. So that he could lay down his life as a ransom for many—paying the eternal price that our sins deserve; that he could take our sins away and give us his perfect life. He came so that we could be declared not guilty by the Lord and so that he could remove the dividing wall of hostility between us and God.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem he was riding to his death. He also died so that he could also rise from the dead and defeat death, making death not an end to be feared, but a beginning to look forward to. For our death ushers in an eternity of perfection with our Lord forever. The Children knew that Jesus was the Savior—that is why they sang his praises. And so Jesus could not and would not prohibit them! And not only that. This was prophesied about in Scripture. Jesus quotes Psalm 8 when he says, **“have you never read, “ ‘From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise’?”** Of course the Jewish leaders knew those words. They were the experts in the law and Jesus quoted Palm 8, a well-known Psalm about how Christ would leave the glories and riches of heaven behind to live as a lowly human. In this psalm, God taught his people that he treasured the praise of

children because it comes from faith. Most Jewish people in Jesus' day recognized that Psalm 8 is a prophecy about the coming Savior. So when Jesus quoted it, as referring to himself at that moment, he left his enemies sputtering. They didn't know what to say.

So the fact remains—God ordains praise from his children. That means that it is God who causes praise to come out of the lips of children—whether they are young and old. He does this through the gospel. Through the gospel the Holy Spirit works—giving and strengthening faith. Through baptism, through the gospel message we hear in worship and Bible Study or that we read in his Word, through the sacrament of Holy Communion, God reaches into our hearts and fills us with joy in our Savior and confidence in his promises. And so, as our faith and knowledge of our Lord grows, so does the sound of his praises coming from our mouths.

As we began our worship today we imitated what the children did on that first Palm Sunday. We sang “All glory, laud, and honor To you, Redeemer, King, To whom the lips of children Made sweet hosannas ring.” In a bit we have another opportunity to follow their example, as we do whenever we partake of the Lord's Supper, singing the “Holy, Holy Holy.” This is song of praise includes the words of the Palm Sunday children. Hosanna—Save us, Please! What an appropriate song for us to sing before Communion, for in his Holy Supper he does just that!

As the crowds greeted Jesus with these words on Palm Sunday, and the children the next day, we too greet him with the same song as he comes to us with that same body and blood with which he entered Jerusalem to die in our place. It is because our exalted Lord is risen and victorious that we can now receive his living body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. And for that, we sing his praises! Amen.