

Deliver Us

"Hosanna" seems to be one of those words that most people wouldn't be able to give a clear, concise definition, yet everyone seems to know what it means. When we hear the word 'hosanna' we think of things like praising and giving glory to God. A quick search on the internet for the definition of 'Hosanna' does indicate that it means shouts of joy. But did you know that the Hebrew word from which 'Hosanna' derived originally meant 'deliver us' or 'save us' but over time the meaning had changed to be shouts of joy. While it may be puzzling how a word that means 'deliver us' or 'save us' could morph into meaning something totally different, when we take a look at the other Gospel accounts, Luke tells us that the people shouted with joy about all the signs that Jesus had performed. It's understandable, then, that this word could change its meaning over time as the Gospel accounts were harmonized and focus may have been given to one Gospel account over the others.

Thinking of hosanna as a word of praise, it never made much sense to me that if the people were just singing praises and shouts of joy toward Jesus for what He had done why would the Pharisees get so upset at the crowd noise. After all, it was the beginning of the festival of Passover and people would be coming to Jerusalem for the festival. This was always explained that the Romans would get upset over all the noise and ruckus and become suspicious that something would happen. When you consider the original meaning of Hosanna and how the Pharisees would have heard it at that time, then their reaction is much more understandable. They would have been afraid that the Romans would have concluded that the people were encouraging Jesus to take that next step from performing works of wonder to the full role of the Messiah, the Deliverer and openly resist the Romans with the intention of pushing the Romans out of the Holy Land.

In short, then we could then hear the crowds not just singing praises to Jesus, but also making a prayer. Instead of just singing praise songs to Jesus, we now see that they were also singing intercessory songs to Jesus; a plea that would upset the status quo and lead those in power to take steps to preserve their power and the status quo, creating a tension between Jesus and the religious authorities. Little did they know that less than a week later, that prayer would be answered; but not in the way that the people wanted or anticipated. That tension that began with Jesus' entry into the Holy City escalated on a daily basis as Jesus cleansed the Temple & taught there throughout the week, and it culminated in the crucifixion of Jesus. While the authorities thought crucifying Jesus would be an end to a 'thorn in their side' and quell any civil unrest that Jesus may have tried to start, what it really led to is the single most important event that changed the course of world history.

What does this mean for us, today? Does it matter what the people were shouting? It does in that we can better understand those events that happened that first Holy Week and see how they are interconnected, that there is a synergy to the whole week that the separate incidents don't have on their own. The authorities were reacting more than just jealousy over Jesus getting more attention than they were getting, but a concern of maintaining the status quo that this outsider was threatening. When we look around us today, we see the same motivations in people that we see in the chief priests, the Pharisees, Pilate, Herod, Judas, Peter and the other apostles, the crowd and the Roman soldiers. We see the same desires for power; of protecting and expanding that power by denying others of their basic rights; of wanting to invoke God to do what we desire; to take the

'easy way' instead of staying true to our beliefs; and justifying our abusive actions by claiming we were just 'following orders'.

May we really live by the same observation of the Roman soldier who declared that truly Jesus was the Son of God.

As we begin this Holy Week, may the people's shouts to Jesus of "Deliver us" become our shouts of reliance to Jesus to deliver us from all that keep us and all people from being the kind of people that God wants us to be.

YouTube Links:

Service: <https://youtu.be/jitwL32eDHY>