

*“Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance.”* This is the prayer for the First Sunday in Advent. Our prayer today. “Hosanna! Save us! Save us, Lord, from our sins!” is what we are asking.

It’s what we see and hear in the text before us. As Jesus rides into Jerusalem, the people shout, “*Hosanna!*” “Save us! Save us, now!”

How wonderful, right? They are praying the same prayer that we offer today. But are they? They do cry Hosanna! Save us! Yet, from what are they asking to be saved? From Rome. From the Roman rule over them. The Roman Caesar, and governor, and soldiers stationed in their city and in their country.

They enthusiastically shout Hosanna! Jesus is riding into their city on a donkey. He’s up to something. He never rides. He always walks wherever He goes. But today He rides. Something monumental is about to happen. Finally. After all these years of Roman rule over them they can now smell the air of deliverance. And so, they spread their cloaks on the road, and cut leafy branches from the fields to hail the coming of their deliverer. Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest!

But Jesus proves to be a great big disappointment. He doesn’t square off against the Roman authorities. He doesn’t do a thing to deliver them from Rome. All their shouts of Hosanna do nothing to spur Jesus on to fight for their deliverance.

And so, they switch deliverers. They go from Jesus to Barabbas. “*Which of these two should I release to you?*” asks Pilate, and just a few days later. Barabbas was in prison for insurrection and murder. A horrible man. A rebel. Ruthless and violent. But it’s obvious to them that Jesus will never deliver them from the Romans. He is too gentle, too kind, too caring. But Barabbas, he is just the opposite of Jesus. The kind of man he is, he would fight tooth and nail. And so they cry for Barabbas. “Release Barabbas to us! We want Barabbas! But Jesus, crucify Him!” cries the mob. He is no good to us. He will never become our deliverer.”

Hosanna is our cry today. Save us. Deliver us. Yet we need to search our own hearts and ask ourselves from what are we wanting to be saved? Our sins, or something else? What is it that weighs heavily upon us? What is causing us to lose sleep at night and to be stressed through the day? Maybe it’s not our sins. Maybe it’s our health, or lack of it. Maybe it’s our government. Maybe it’s the war in Ukraine or in the Middle East. And maybe it’s someone, even someone close to us who is causing us stress.

If it’s any of these, we may feel, like the people in our text would feel, that Jesus has let us down. We’ve been crying to Him for a long time. But our health is no better. Our government isn’t either. Wars rage on. And our stress level is through the roof. Perhaps it’s time to switch deliverers.

There are many who walk away from Jesus in this way, and pretty much every day. Apparently, they have lost confidence in Him. He is just not meeting their expectations. They want better in life, and Jesus is simply not coming through for them.

Is this how you feel? Because it's true. Trusting in Jesus is not necessarily going to improve your health. Look at Larry. He trusted in Jesus. But his health went downhill quickly. We just had his funeral on Friday.

Trusting in Jesus as your deliverer may not be helping your stress level and giving you a good night's sleep. It may do nothing to end corruption in government, or end all the conflicts going on in our world. But if these are the reasons we cry Hosanna! we don't need Jesus. We need therapy, and perhaps a prescription.

Yet if you cry Hosanna because of your sins, because of the pain and suffering they cause, because of your conscience which bothers you – the guilt over your sins, and because you cry with the Apostle: "*Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*" then you are in the right place. Jesus is the Deliverer you need. And He is riding here to you today. He rides to you on the donkey of holy water, holy food, and holy words. And whenever Jesus rides, something monumental is going to happen.

Jesus rode on the donkey into Jerusalem, and that something which was going to happen was the cross. So very monumental. He was riding there to lay down His life for you and for all sinners. And today Jesus rides to you to give you the blessings of the cross. The forgiveness, life, and salvation that He won for all sinners by His sufferings, death, and resurrection. And these blessings He places into your ears and into your mouth to make them your own.

Can you smell the air of deliverance? It's the air you breathe here in His Church. The air of forgiveness. Your forgiveness. "Rescue us and save us from our sins" we pray on this First Sunday in Advent. This rescue, this salvation is what we need the most. Because he who has good health, has nothing if his sins are not forgiven. He who is at peace with the world, is lost forever unless his sins are forgiven him. He who has no stress in life, but does not seek the forgiveness of his sins in Jesus Christ, will have stress for all eternity.

But he whose sins are forgiven can deal with anything and everything that life can throw at us. This is why Larry was at peace through it all. He had the peace of Christ, believing that his sins were forgiven. And today he is in heaven.

Your sins, too, are forgiven. Jesus has rescued you from them. Your cries of Hosanna! do not fall on deaf ears. He does deliver you. He does save you. He is here now on the donkey of His Gospel for you. And when He rides on that donkey, great things happen – your rescue from your sins, your salvation. Hosanna! we cry. Save us, Lord! And He does. Amen.