



## **HOSANNA!**

*Jeff Peabody  
New Day Church  
Federal Way, WA  
March 9th, 2008*

Would you believe me if I told you that my feet used to be bigger?

My shoes aren't that large. In fact, both my boys now have bigger feet than me. But mine were bigger at least for a day. When I was in second or third grade, I entered a parade in the category of "Clown with the biggest feet." My dad built me these incredible clown shoes out of plywood and canvas. They had balloons inside to give them their nice round shape. They were so heavy I could barely lift my feet. My ankles were killing me by the end of the parade.

I tied for first place, and I was so mad, because the other kid who won just had pieces of cardboard on his shoes that were as long as my real clown shoes. I could have gotten the same prize for a lot less work.

Anyway, that was my parade experience as a kid. Have any of you ever been in a parade? Have you ever gone to watch one? Parades are a lot of fun. They are usually to celebrate something. There's usually music, flags, a lot of clapping.

Today is Palm Sunday, where we remember a parade that Jesus was in. It was kind of a spontaneous parade that just sprang up around him. It was a celebration of him.

Jesus had been on a mission with one city in mind for some time. He wasn't just randomly going from village to village healing and teaching – he had a direction and a plan. Look what Luke tells us:

### **Luke 9:51-52**

*As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.*

In other words, he's focused. There's an intensity about him and the events recorded in this phase of his ministry. He started out up in Galilee and he has steadily been making his way south. Now he's in the final stretch, taking the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, which is about a 15 mile trek up some pretty steep hills. I could not have made it in my

clown shoes. When Jesus got about two miles away from Jerusalem, he began setting things in place for the parade. Here's what happened.

**Matthew 21:1-17**

*As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."*

*This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:*

*"Say to the Daughter of Zion,  
'See, your king comes to you,  
gentle and riding on a donkey,  
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"*

*The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,*

*"Hosanna to the Son of David!"*

*"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"*

*"Hosanna in the highest!"*

*When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"*

*The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."*

*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. "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.'"*

*The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. 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.*

*"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'?"*

*And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.*

Have you seen those cameras that you strap onto your dog or cat? They let you see the world from Fido's point of view, which is completely different. All of a sudden you notice feet and grass and dust bunnies under the couch. Everything takes on a different perspective.

I was thinking about this not only being Palm Sunday but also being Family Sunday here at New Day. I always like the family Sundays because it's great to have all you kids in the service. So I wanted to think about Palm Sunday with my kid cam on, to see what would stand out about the story if we looked at it from a kid's point of view. And what I discovered was that kids are a pretty important part of this story.

Churches around the world have always had kids participate on Palm Sunday, holding palm branches and singing. Of course that all goes back to those first kids who surrounded Jesus in the temple. And let's not forget that even the donkey was just a kid. So there's a lot of youthful energy to this story.

But I had never thought much about exactly what the kids did and why it mattered. So I think today is the perfect opportunity to strap on the kid cam and look a little closer.

This is not the first occasion where we find Jesus interacting with kids. In the chapters leading up to Palm Sunday, Matthew tells us about two other times when children caught Jesus' attention. I think they're helpful background about how Jesus viewed children, so let's take a quick look at them. The first one is found in Matthew 18.

#### **Matthew 18:2-5**

*He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

*"And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me."*

Wouldn't you have liked to have been that kid that Jesus grabbed that day? He had no idea what Jesus was planning. All he had to do was stand there. Jesus wanted to make a point and he was able to make it without the boy saying or doing anything.

That's because kids are **reminders by nature**.

What's the difference between a kid and an adult? Age and size of course. But beyond that, one important fact is that kids depend on adults for most things. In fact, on tax forms, what are kids called? Dependents. When you're a kid, you can't vote. You can't drive. You have to get your money from your parents. You don't own your own house. You don't make the rules. For the most part, you pretty much rely on somebody else to

make a lot of decisions for you. You don't have a lot of power in your life. But as a kid, that's okay. That's the way it's supposed to be. You're provided for and cared for, and hopefully you don't have to worry about where your food's coming from or where you'll sleep. You just have to trust that your parents or grandparents will take care of you.

Grown ups -- we like to do things for ourselves. We like having our own power. We like being independent – not having to count on anyone else.

The normal progression is for kids to turn into adults. So Jesus really catches the grown ups off guard when he says, “When it comes to spiritual things, adults need to become more like kids. If you want to be part of my kingdom, you need to go back to the idea of being dependent. You have to be okay with trusting God more than yourself.” Learn to be a dependent.

By just standing a kid up front, Jesus turned all kids into visual reminders of our relationship to God. Kids don't have to do anything to be that reminder – you just are.

Not only that, Jesus says that the **kids are like litmus paper**. Have you ever used litmus paper? It's a way to tell how acidic something is. You put the little slip of paper in a liquid and it will turn color, and what happens to the paper tells you what the liquid is made of.

Jesus says when you put a child in a group, they're like litmus paper. You can tell a lot about the group by how they treat kids. It goes beyond just being nice to them, because Jesus says kids are representatives to him, and how they're treated matters because it is as if we were treating Jesus that way.

There are a lot of different characteristics to look for in a church. Parents will quite often choose a church based on whether or not their kids like it. I used to think that seemed like kind of a shallow reason, but it's actually one of the best. It goes right back to what Jesus said. When a church makes kids feel welcome and at home and important, it's really reflecting an attitude toward Christ. What's our priority? Who do we value? Do we recognize Christ in people who might not seem all that big and important on the outside?

Kids, just by being yourselves, you are God's reminder of our need to depend on him. And just by being you, you also shine a light on how people really feel about Jesus. Kids are important! Jesus was pretty clear about that. But just one chapter later, Jesus' disciples had already forgotten what he had said.

### **Matthew 19:13-14**

*Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them.*

*Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."*

Now what's so amazing to me is that this is the second time in two chapters that Jesus has focused on children, and both of these events happen on his way to Jerusalem. This is in the middle of that very focused, intense trip we talked about.

That's why the disciples thought Jesus wouldn't have time to pray for the children. He had to focus his attention on the serious stuff. After all, the kids couldn't even really understand what was going on. They couldn't help solve any problems.

But Jesus is never too busy to care about even the smallest people. Have you ever felt like God wouldn't have time for you or your little problems? This verse is a huge comfort. Jesus says you are never a distraction for him. You're always on his agenda.

A.B. Simpson once said, "By and by, when we welcome Him to His heavenly throne, we shall find that a vast proportion of the ransomed crowd will consist of little children."

So as surprising as it may seem, kids have moved to center stage as Jesus has gotten closer to Jerusalem. That's the background. We see how Jesus valued them, made time for them and saw them as showing important truths about his kingdom. It's no wonder then that as he arrives in town, we see kids and adults responding so enthusiastically to him.

*A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.*

We can be sure there were plenty of kids with their parents in that crowd. You know, you always hear about the palm branches on palm Sunday, but I think maybe it should be called Coat Sunday because of all the coats people laid down on the ground.

I went out our front door this week, and there was a coat spread out on the ground right in front of me! But nobody meant to put it there for me – it was just one of the neighbor boys who had forgotten it from the day before.

But these coats that people spread on the road – they did it on purpose. What was that all about?

Have you ever heard the expression, "Roll out the red carpet?" When Queen Elizabeth from England goes anywhere, they roll out a red carpet for her because she's royalty. It's a way of preparing for her entrance that makes her stand out and lets people know she is special and different. In one sense, that's what people were doing for Jesus – showing the world that they thought he was royalty.

But it gets a little more personal than that. Back in the Old Testament, the bad king Joram was wounded in battle, so the prophet Elisha sent a messenger to anoint a better king to take his place. Jehu was a commander in the army, sitting with all the other officers when the messenger came in and said, "I have something to tell you." So they

went off privately, and the messenger poured oil on his head and told him he was the new king.

When Jehu came back, all the officers asked, “What did he say?” And Jehu replied, “Oh you know. Crazy stuff.”

They said, “No, we don’t know. Tell us.” So Jehu said, “He says God is making me king.”

Listen to how all those army officers responded:

### **2 Kings 9:13**

*Then they hurried and each man took his garment and placed it under him on the bare steps, and blew the trumpet, saying, "Jehu is king!"*

What a powerful thing to watch as one officer stood up and took off his cloak and spread it on the ground. Then another did the same thing, then another and another until they had all done it. By putting their own garments at Jehu’s feet, they were doing more than making a red carpet for him. They were putting themselves on the line. They were saying, “I personally am placing myself under your authority. I’ll serve you as my king. You have my allegiance.”

Now take that picture and come back to our story this morning. When that great crowd took off their own coats and put them down in the dirt, they were symbolically saying the same thing. “This is my king. I’ll come under his authority and let him be in charge. My loyalties are with him.”

Whether we’re kids or grown ups, we each have to come to that point of laying it down for Jesus. Nici talked this morning about her summer mission trip to Africa. The group that she’s going with, Teen Missions, used to have the slogan, “Get dirty for God.” I think of that when I think of all those coats thrown down in the dirt. What am I willing to let go of and let get messy for Christ? What have I been hanging on to and protecting that I need to lay at his feet?

Eventually, the parade reached the city itself.

*When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"*

Again, since we’re talking about the whole city, this verse would include kids as well as adults. Everybody’s reaction to Jesus was the same.

The word translated as “stirred” is from the Greek word *eseizthe*, which is where we get our English word *seismic*. What does seismic have to do with? Earthquakes! People were having earthquakes in their hearts. Jesus didn’t fit the mold of what they thought a king would be like. They didn’t know what to do with him and they found it disturbing.

In other words, Jesus shakes things up when he enters the scene. He stirs the pot. He throws people a little off balance in a good way, prodding us out of our comfort zone. He does that with the intent that it will make us sit up and ask, "Who is this?" He wants us to want to know him better.

Sometimes it is in the earthquakes where we see him best. Life is full of unsettling moments. It isn't that God purposely likes to insert chaos into our world, but he can use it when it's there.

In the novel, *The Shack*, author William Young says, "Grace doesn't depend on suffering to exist, but where there is suffering, you will find grace in many facets and colors."

So when the ground shakes, we better be ready to ask "Who is this?" because Jesus of Nazareth is on the move.

We saw how much Jesus stirred things up when he reached the temple. He turned over tables and pushed people out that shouldn't be there, because the temple had become just a place for business instead of for worship.

Once he had cleared everyone out he started doing something new there.

*The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them.*

I love that. Jesus replaced what had been happening in that courtyard with something so much better. He was healing people up. The broken, the weak and the hopeless were coming to him and finding wholeness and strength and sight..

You know, the Bible says our hearts are God's temple. And when we invite Jesus in, he sometimes has to clear some things out. There are things inside us that don't belong in a space that's supposed to be devoted to God. So through is Spirit, Jesus starts turning over tables in our lives and exposing what's going on. Adults – you may wonder about God's timing sometimes. You've been in an earthquake, your world is shaking and you're saying, "Really God? Now is when you're going to start turning over tables – when my life is in turmoil?" And the answer is yes!

But then he sits down and starts to heal us up. He binds up our wounds. He forgives our sins. He comforts our hurts. He removes our pain. And he begins to make us whole again.

That sounds pretty good, doesn't it? But the whole idea doesn't make everyone happy. It sure didn't on that day.

*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.*

*"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'?"*

Here's where kids really stood out in contrast to the adults. I wanted to call my sermon, "Kids rule, religious leaders drool," but then I realized – hey wait a minute, I'm a religious leader. That's not quite right. But the kids in this situation were on to something that was completely lost on the priests and teachers that day.

Hosanna is a word we mostly only hear on Palm Sunday, but it's a good word. Anybody remember what it means? "Save us." It's a cry for help, with the source of the help being right there.

Imagine being way out in the ocean all by yourself. You're tired and starting to slip under the water, and you're afraid you're going to drown. You would yell for help, but there's nobody to hear you, so it's kind of pointless.

But let's say you rise up over a wave and all of a sudden right in front of you is a man in a kayak. Now you cry out for help with a lot of hope, because here's someone who can make a difference and rescue you. That's what it was like for the kids and adults seeing Jesus.

The cry Hosanna is that kind of "save us". It is a happy cry of relief. It's the cry that's released when there is finally a real hope of rescue in sight. I quoted A.B. Simpson earlier, but he once said, "Our hallelujahs start as hosannas." Our praise of God grows first out of that cry for help that sees in him real hope.

Those kids that day had no trouble saying that to Jesus. But sometimes we have a hard time reaching that point. We don't want to ask for help, or we're not sure Jesus could be the one to do anything for us anyway. We side with the chief priests and go, "There's no way I'm saying THAT."

Our hallelujahs start out as hosannas. We've got to admit we need help and ask him for it.

Jesus came to the defense of those children, and he quoted the first part of Psalm 8, verse 2.

**Psalm 8:2**

*From the lips of children and infants  
you have ordained praise*

Do you know what the second part of the verse says?

*because of your enemies,  
to silence the foe and the avenger.*

Now I take away two things from that. First, God has given kids a job. It says he ordained their praise. Kind of an old fashioned word, but it means he set it in place, he planned for it. If you have ever thought you weren't old enough to do something for God, this verse shows you that's not true. He has a role for you to play in his plans.

Secondly, what is that role? God says the praise of kids stops his enemies. Pretty cool, huh? When kids say good things about God, when they look to him for help, the devil loses. When you put your trust in God and worship him, the effect is huge. Your choice to follow God is part of a battle and you are a warrior in God's army. Bruce is a warrior when he praises God. Tobey is fighting evil when she asks God to help her. Sean strikes a blow by trusting Jesus to help him.

It's all part of God's amazing strategy. Kids and babies seem so small and weak compared to evil forces. But God has worked through them over and over in his plans to defeat the devil. He took a scrawny little guy named David and knocked down a Goliath. He took a girl named Miriam and helped her save her brother Moses' life when Pharaoh wanted him dead. God took a young boy named Joseph who was a slave and turned him into a powerful ruler who rescued people from famine. He took another young boy with no name in Acts and used him to uncover a plot to kill Paul.

And then God did the most unexpected thing of all. He sent Jesus to earth as a little baby. The Son of God was a kid himself, the last person anyone would expect to save the world. And he grew up to defeat the devil once and for all in the weakest way possible – by dying on a cross.

God still is speaking through children today, silencing his enemies as kids put their faith in Jesus. He ordains the smallest and the weakest to do his mightiest work, because then there's no question who the power came from. And God's enemies have nothing they can say in return.

What an awesome thing that Jesus made kids be part of his message to the world. He insisted that all of us need to be like children in our relationship to him. So how do we do that? If we take our cues from the kids in this story, we can ask ourselves a few questions. Adults, it may be family Sunday but these questions are for you, too, so it's time to take off that kidcam and answer these from your own perspective:

1. How's my hosanna? Meaning - have I joined the cry of "save me"? That's the real starting point. Am I ready to be dependent?

2. What do I need healed up?

Some of you are here this morning with deep hurts. Jesus is ready to come in and make you whole and strong. Does he need to turn over a few tables first? Is there some junk

that you need to clear out to make room for him? The blind and lame came to him and he healed them. He can do the same for your emotional and spiritual pain.

3. What do I need to lay down?

Have you been hanging on to something that you need to lay at Jesus feet? Preparing the way for him means being willing to get a little messy. If there's something you've been holding back from God – let it go. Make today Coat Sunday and join the celebration.