

PRAYERS FOR HOLY WEEK

HOSANNA
TO
HALLELUJAH

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Holy Week begins and ends with shouts of praise. On Palm Sunday, we cry out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” On Easter Sunday, our praise rings out: “Christ is risen! Hallelujah!” In between these words of praise, we hear other words—challenges, parables, agonized prayer, false accusations and our Lord’s final cry, “It is finished!” During this Holy Week, we also hear questions, often with unexpected answers. These questions shape our thoughts and prayers as we draw near to the cross and the empty tomb.

If anyone says to you, “Why are you doing this?” say, “The Lord has need of it...”

Mark 11:3

Lord Jesus, you sent your disciples to bring back a donkey for your ride into Jerusalem. If anyone questioned them, they were to reply, “The Lord has need of it.” The donkey would be returned. Jesus, humble King, you have given me gifts and skills to be used to serve you through serving others. When I question or doubt my gifts and callings, turn my heart to that simple response: “The Lord has need of it.” Lead me to follow your example of humility and service, because you did not come to be served but to serve and to give your life as a ransom for us all. Amen.

Read Mark 11:1-10.

PALM SUNDAY – MORNING

And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?”

Matthew 21:10

It is the most important question of all, as important on that first Palm Sunday as it is today: “Who is this?” Who is this miracle-working rabbi from Nazareth? Jesus rode into Jerusalem as the prophet Zechariah foretold, humble and riding on a donkey. The crowds waved palm branches and shouted, “Hosanna,” a word that means, “Save us now!” Was this the Christ, the long-promised Messiah? Had he finally come to save them from their Roman conquerors? “Save us now!” the people shouted. It was true that this king had come to save them but not in the way they imagined. He did not come to establish an earthly kingdom. He came to suffer, die and rise to win an eternal kingdom. Who is this? This is Jesus, the Son of God, the promised Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the world. Save us now!

Jesus, I do not have to ask, “Who is this?” I know and believe that you are the Messiah. You are my Lord and Savior. Through your death and resurrection, I have forgiveness for my sins and the gift of eternal life. Help me always to be ready to answer when someone asks about you, “Who is this?” Amen.

Read Matthew 21:1-11.

PALM SUNDAY – EVENING

“Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”

Matthew 22:17

Lord Jesus, your opponents wanted to entangle you in your own words, but the wisdom of your answer put an end to that. Yet I sometimes ask the same question. Do I *have* to pay taxes? I do not really want the government to have the money that I have earned! Yet in your Word, you, to whom all authority in heaven and on earth has been given, teach us to obey the earthly authorities and to give to them the respect, honor—and taxes!—owed to them. Help me to remember that I am subject to these authorities, just as you were subject to them during your earthly ministry. You have given them such authority for our good. You answered the question about taxes, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21). A coin brought to you carried the image of Caesar, so the coin and the tax payments were rightfully his. I have been created in the image of God, and I belong to you. By faith I am a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. Help me to be a good citizen of the nation in which I live. Your opponents marveled at the wisdom of your answer, and so do I! Amen.

Read Matthew 22:15-22.

MONDAY *of* **HOLY WEEK – MORNING**

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”

Matthew 22:36

The question was asked to test Jesus, as once again his enemies tried to trap him into saying something wrong. If Jesus elevated one part of the Law of Moses over another, he could easily be accused of disregarding some important aspect of the Law. Jesus was, of course, ready with an answer. He summed up the Law, the written expression of God’s will for our lives, with one word—love. The greatest command is to love God with all your heart, soul and mind. What was the second greatest command? Love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus himself showed us this way of love. Out of love and obedience to his heavenly Father and putting his neighbor’s needs, that is, our needs, ahead of his own, Jesus took up his cross for the sake of our salvation.

Lord God, you sent your Son to be my Savior. I love you with all my heart, soul and mind. Lead me to study your Word every day so that, empowered by the Holy Spirit, I learn to love your commands and live according to them. Help me to love my neighbor, that is, everyone I meet, so that I will desire for them what I desire for myself, including the gift of forgiveness and salvation in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Read Matthew 22:34-40.

MONDAY *of* **HOLY WEEK – EVENING**

Holy Week is the most sacred period of the church year. This booklet provides prayers for morning and evening of each day of this special time. Short reflections are included to help to focus attention on the progression of events as Jesus moves through his suffering, death and resurrection—from the hosannas of Palm Sunday to the hallelujahs of Easter.

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