

“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.
“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 9:24.

MARK 11

¹As they approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, on the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ²and told them, “Go into the village ahead of you. As soon as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it, and he will send it back here without delay.’”

⁴They left and found a colt on the street, tied at a door; and they untied it. ⁵Some who were standing there asked them, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” ⁶The disciples answered them just as Jesus had instructed them, and the men let them go.

⁷They brought the colt to Jesus, threw their garments on it, and Jesus sat on it. ⁸Many people spread their garments on the road. Others spread branches that they had cut from the fields. ⁹Those who went in front and those who followed were crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”

¹¹Jesus went into the temple courts in Jerusalem and looked around at everything. Since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.



“Look, Mom, no hands!” are the words of every child ever, when they discover how to balance on their bikes. I think we’ve all had our LMNH moment. But we haven’t all had moments like Ryan’s. LookMomNoHands.com is the website of Ryan Hudson-Peralta who is about my age, but was born with shortened limbs and no hands. He is able to get himself dressed, brush teeth, and do all kinds of daily activities with feet just beneath his hips ... and nubs at his shoulders.

Well, Jesus did not need hands, either. Jesus needed no hands to direct the owner of the colts to lend Him a humble steed. Jesus needed no hands to be placed on the colt. Jesus didn’t need the hands of the people to wave branches and leave their garments on the path to the city. He didn’t need their hands of praise. This unlikely King could have called for praises from the angels, the trees, or the rocks ... and they would give it up.

So it is quite an honor to know that Jesus accepted the praises of the people, His devoted disciples and crowds.

In fact, some of us might think it is quite an honor to be accepted in a place of worship, in the house of God, online or in person.

Today is Palm Sunday. It IS an honor. It is one of the greatest days of worship and praise of the whole year! It is not only a day when we join in praise, but also a day when we learn how and why we praise God. His humble and royal entry on a donkey draws all attention to him as King. The clothing and the palm branches encourage our gifts. And the singing of the children and the crowds of people draw out our hymns of praise. Although many in our world would rather go to hell than to applaud God, today we will learn to do so with our . . .

Hands of Praise

Our text tells us that Jesus did not come as a Judge, but as a humble King of grace and mercy. No steed of war like Alexander the Great nor giant elephant like Hannibal of Carthage—Jesus rode in on the stubborn donkey.

And ever since the first century, Jesus Christ has been continually entering, and He has made His presence known in many thousands of hearts. But even in these last years of the Church, a time of need and a time of sickness, few have received Him. Jesus has been rejected so often. Many have turned their backs on Him, or, after a period of belief, became unfaithful to Him. Could Jesus have grown tired of entering since He has already been rejected so often?

No! Jesus Christ doesn't get tired and weary of arriving. Mark 11 testifies to that. That visible entry into Jerusalem is a symbol of His continual invisible coming to the New Testament Jerusalem of His dear Church. He fulfills His promise, "*If anyone loves me, he will hold onto my Word; my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him*" (John 14:23). Jesus also says, "*Surely I am with you always to the very end of the age*" (Matt. 28:20).

Isn't it comforting to know that Jesus will come again this Holy Week? Isn't He the holy Son of God, and aren't we all sinners who fail to offer the praise we should properly show to God? Shouldn't we expect that, when He comes, He will come to punish us according to the deeds of our hands, according to our sins?

It might seem that way, but let's look at the triumphant entry into Jerusalem. It is true that our text presents Jesus as high and exalted. It tells us that He is all-knowing. From afar He even knows a nearby village of Bethphage and their thoughts and words. He can guide the heart of one who owns two beasts of

burden, according to His will. He can tell His unquestioning disciples where they will be and what they'll be asked. He knows it all.

Take comfort that Jesus came tenderly, and He will come again to us and show us His love. Yes, while He is all-knowing; while He knows all the sins we committed (even those we've forgotten) as well as those we will commit in the future; while He knows the condition of our heart better than we do ourselves; while He is all too well aware of the magnitude of our corruption by sin

Nevertheless, He does not come to punish your sins, but to forgive them, to wipe them away, and to throw them into the depths of the sea. He knows the trouble you are in, the tears you secretly shed, and the enemies that oppress you. Your plight is great, but your King of grace wants to provide you with everything you need, bodily and spiritually. He wants to hear your prayers and sighs, to dry your tears, to deflect your dangers, to protect you from your enemies, to heal your diseases, and finally to redeem you from all despair by His blessed death.

But Jesus Christ isn't only willing to help you. He is also able to do so, because He is the almighty Son of God. He can support you in a way that no one else can equal, and He can offer counsel that no one else can supply. Everything is in His hands. He can even direct the hearts of people to make everything work together for our temporal and eternal salvation.

When the call, "Jesus comes again!" is heard at the end, we will lift up our heads and greet Him as the people we read about in today's gospel, "*Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest*" (v. 9b-10)!

The crowds on Palm Sunday were not sparing with their praise of Jesus Christ. They didn't hold back. They lavished on Him whatever their hands could find:

- One guy happily handed over his donkey.
- The disciples saddled that donkey for Jesus with their own coats.
- Still others, with empty hands and nothing else to give, cut down palm branches as a symbol of Jesus' victory.

The crowds and the disciples all praised Jesus with their hands. But it begins with a burning heart that furthers Jesus Christ's kingdom with words and works.

Oh, may our whole life be such a constant "Hosanna," "Save us!" and a spreading of palm branches on the path before Jesus.

Aren't there many who are afraid Jesus will not come to them, because they aren't sure if they fit into the new Jerusalem as true believers and true members of Christ's Church? Not at all! When Jesus entered Jerusalem, He visited His spiritual, believing Jerusalem, but He also came to everyone else who entered the city—even the most miserable and lost sinners.

So it is today. Jesus enters—first, into His Church, His true believers. But He also visits all those who question the Church, even if they're still wandering and lost souls. His Church is wherever His Word and sacraments are. Where His means of grace are absent, there Jesus Christ is absent. In such a place, there is no Christ, no salvation, and no blessing. Anyone who does not want to keep God's Word and sacraments hopes in vain for Jesus' entrance. Only the new Jerusalem, who has His Word and sacraments, will hear these words: *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you, humble and riding on a donkey”* (Zech. 9:9).

For this reason, it is well with all who are determined to listen carefully to the precious Word of God on Holy Week. There are those who, so far this year, did not completely forget, forsake, and lose the Lord Jesus; but they were unfaithful to Him. They didn't keep much of their confirmation vow to Him. They were overcome by a whole lot of sins. In many respects, they went more backward than forward. Yet they shouldn't despair! Holy Week begins, and Jesus, the King of kings, comes with new grace.

Whoever was outwitted by the devil, the world, or your sinful nature, losing the Savior who dwelled in your heart, should feel encouraged today. You may have spent the last year without peace and rest, without light and comfort, and without power and hope, oppressed by the ugly feeling that maybe God left you. But Jesus enters in, bringing in His arms a fresh supply of grace.

God holds out His hands to you. He wants to extend to you the new grace of His entrance into Jerusalem. You might be bound with a thousand straps of sin and a thousand chains of guilt, but He speaks to you as before; “The devil, sin, and hell are disarmed. I have taken their arms clean off. I made a public display of them by triumphing over them in Christ. I have given your hands back to you, hands of faith to receive my grace.” Never thought you'd say it, but, “Look, Mom! Hands!” in Jesus' name, Amen.