

## SAVE US NOW

Matthew 26: 14-27  
Philippians 2: 5-11  
March 20, 2005 SBCC

From a distance, climbing slowly toward the city, a small band of men push their way through palms and shouts from a noisy crowd. One rides a donkey. They make their way along a path tromped down by centuries of caravans and conquering armies, as well as conquered armies and slaves and masters – and ordinary travelers. People line the way crying “Hosanna, save us! Hosanna, save us now!” Hosanna means “Save us now”

The noisy people spread their cloaks on the road, waving leafy branches and they shout: “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven! Save us now, now, NOW!

If ever a generation were able to understand those people who lined the path of the first Palm Sunday parade, it is we who were born into the now generation. It is we, the impatient people, who spend money we do not have, made easy by seemingly unlimited plastic credit. We want healing without the discipline of everyday personal involvement in our own recovery. We yearn to win the spiritual lottery and bank unlimited amounts of instant faith, rather than save over a lifetime those precious moments which add up to a deep relationship with Jesus Christ. Yes, we understand the folks who stood along the route of that first parade shouting “Save us now!”

I wonder what happened to that crowd? So enthusiastic, throwing their cloaks down before a man and a colt, calling to their new hero. “Do it like David did! Make yourself king! Change things around here! We’re here to cheer you on so you can save us. Hosanna!

Jesus had the crowd in the palm of his hand. He might have used them to his advantage to gain political power, causing an uprising. Certainly that’s what a lot of them wanted. Probably it’s what Judas wanted.

His cause might have caught on. It might have toppled the Roman Empire. But Jesus does a strange thing. Rather than rallying the troops to his cause and seizing the moment for himself, he rides off toward the cross. He rides on with a different understanding of time and a different definition of rescue. Jesus does not avoid the waiting and the weeping during his yearning time of faith. With unique insight into the mind of God, he is willing to wait with pain in the deadly darkness before the dawn.

Not so for the save-us-now people who wander off humming hosannas under their breath. They are off to find more promising messiahs to rescue them right away and give a quick fix meaning to their lives. Perhaps another leader, another cult, another car, another job, another drink, another baby, another cause, another marriage, another vacation...

something that does not keep them waiting. Anything to avoid the weeping time, the yearning time, between hosanna and alleluia.

As the man on the colt rides off, the crowd does not follow. Most never know what happens a week later, never hear the alleluia dawn. Jesus rides on alone; through a noisy crowd, alone. Alone, he rides on to discover the meaning of this cup passed into his hands. Alone, he suffers. Alone, he dies. And because he learns how painful it is to be alone, he vows he will never, never leave us alone. "And remember", he says, "I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The hosanna crowd cannot wait. They wander off whistling "save us now" under their breath as Jesus rides on through the crowd vowing, "I will never, never leave you desolate; I will come to you and bring you peace which is not of this world."

No, the world cannot wait upon the peace of Christ. The world wanders away from the passionate week ahead, away from the waiting and the weeping and the yearning, looking for other messiahs to distract them from thoughts of death and loneliness and the long, difficult search for meaning.

And so it is, the save-us-now people stand around somewhat bored, finally shuffling off to the rhythm of a halfhearted hosanna, kicking up dust and covering the prints of a donkey's path. Fair-weather people avoid the difficult search for meaning. Save-us-now folks have little patience with the ambiguities of life, so they turn their backs on the lonely man riding on toward the answer, and they buy into the mundane.

And the people raise their voices, "Hosanna, save us *now*," as he rides toward our salvation.

Let me conclude with this poem by Sylvia Guinn Ammons

"Can you wait with me he asks?"

They wave palms and spread their cloaks upon the road.

And the people raise their voices, "Hosanna, save us now,"

As he breaks the bread and asks,

"Can you share with me this cup?"

They dance along the path drinking in the sunshine.

And the people raise their voices, "Hosanna, save us now," As he stumbles toward the place called "Skull."

"Can you weep at the foot of my cross?"

They shout, "Save yourself."

And the people wander slowly off humming, "Save us now."

As he lay inside the tomb. '

Wait, can you hear the heavenly in the distant lifting dawn?

But they could not; they could not bear the waiting prelude to the Easter Song.