

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Palm Sunday) is John 12:12-19. This is the account of Jesus' Triumphal Entry.

In these verses there appear to be three groups who make up the crowd, or multitude. Those identified in v 12 are the pilgrims "that had come to the feast." V 17 describes another group, possibly a subset of the pilgrims of v 12, but specifically those who had witnessed the raising of Lazarus from the dead. This latter group appears to spread throughout the populace of Jerusalem, sharing their account of the great miracle they had seen. This results in the gathering of the third group described in v 18, who turn out to see the one who is reputed to have worked such a stupendous deed. Thus the raising of Lazarus continues to cause a commotion, not only among those who acclaim Jesus for the miraculous deed (Jn 11:45; 12:9), but also among those who are more determined than ever to eliminate the one who performed the miracle (Jn 11:46-53, 57; 12:10-11, 19).

Those who greeted Jesus took palm branches and went out to meet him. Palm branches were used in the rededication of the temple in 164 B.C. When Simon Maccabeus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem in 141 B.C., palms were used as a national symbol of victory: The Jews entered the citadel [of Jerusalem] with praise and palm branches, and with harps and cymbals and stringed instruments, and with hymns and songs, because a great enemy had been crushed and removed. Some Jewish coins of the NT era had palms and the inscription, "the redemption of Zion." The multitude of saints in heaven who stand before God's throne in Rev 7:9-10 hold palms as they sing praises for their salvation. The use of palm branches by the crowd expresses an acclaim to a conqueror or liberator of the Jews.

The crowd sang "*Hosanna!*" This was a Hebrew expression meaning "Save!" which became an exclamation of praise. They cried out "*Blessed is he who comes in the name of Lord, even the King of Israel.*" Verse 16 says "His disciples did not understand these things at first. This was probably true for the vast majority of the people on that day. The disciples did remember, however, when Jesus was glorified the cross.

There are still many different attitudes concerning Jesus and what he should be. We, as Christians, take great comfort in the fact that Jesus did indeed come in the name of Lord and used the following week to finish his mission to die for the sins of the world. Through the gift of faith, we are a part of an eternal kingdom that can never be conquered by the devil and his evil angels. We can be among those who will wave palm branches in tribute to our eternal king in heaven. We are truly "blessed" because Jesus came in the name of the Lord to suffer, die and rise again.

Prayer: Hosanna! Please save us, O blessed Lord. Amen. (TLSB)

