

Resistant Hope

March 29, 2026

This weekend, across the world, communities are holding marches, parades, and processions, carrying symbols of resistance, symbols of hope. They're gathering because of government oppression and overreach, in protest of policies that police their bodies, tax their livelihoods, and threaten their future. These marches are populated by people who know what it is to feel powerless, afraid, and desperate for something—anything—that might change the world as it is.

What am I talking about?

The rallies that happened yesterday or the Christian practice of holding processions on Palm Sunday? The answer, of course, is both.

You see, Palm Sunday isn't merely an enthusiastic pep rally for Jesus. It's a story about a crowd under imperial pressure crying out for rescue. "Hosanna" doesn't mean, "Yay for us." It means, "Save us now." And that changes everything.

For decades, maybe even centuries, we've cleaned up "Hosana," but the reality is that it's not a celebratory "Hooray," but rather a cry of desperation, and the people lining Jesus' path are not so different from us. They also lived under a regime of "political aggression, the economic logic of zero-sum accomplishments, the martial imagination of shock and awe, and the deploying of borders as rigid markers of belonging and safety." (Dr. Eric Barretto, Princeton Seminary)

In Bible Study on Wednesday, we talked about how eerily current the Gospel reading we'll hear at the end of today's service feels. The victim blaming, the twisted logic, the guard rails and systems crumbling and betraying those they were established to protect.

When the Pharisees voice their concerns in the passage Brittany read for us earlier, they're not being unreasonable. In fact, they're being wise. After all, "as tensions rise, and as the Roman peace is threatened, the Pharisees know the Romans would not hesitate to make an example or two of these otherwise innocent neighbors. Arrest a few, execute a few, the empire might reason, and others will hesitate to follow..."

The experiences of the people of Jesus' time are disturbingly parallel to ours today. They are people who know what it is to feel powerless, afraid, and desperate for something—anything—that might change the world as it is. And so they shout. They hope. They risk.

Today, across this country, Christians are again taking to the streets. Gathering. Marching. Risking. Crying out, "Hosanna—save us now." These Palm Sunday Path actions—these anti-fascism, anti-Christian nationalism marches—are happening in a moment when fear is loud, when truth feels fragile, when the temptation to trade freedom for control is very, very real.

And so the question is not whether people will cry out. The question is: what kind of salvation are we crying out for? Because as Eric Barretto, who teaches New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary, reminds us, the kind of triumph we have been taught to expect is often

shaped by empire. A triumph where winning means someone else loses. A triumph built on fear, aggression, exclusion.

But that is not the triumph Jesus rides into Jerusalem to embody. He comes on a borrowed colt. He comes without an army. He comes not with threats, but with healing. Not with domination, but with dignity. Not with violence, but with life.

The power of empire is the power to control through fear. But the power of Jesus is something else entirely. It is the power to bring good news to the poor. Release to the captives. Healing to the broken. Belonging to those pushed to the margins. It is a power that does not crush—it restores. A power that does not divide—it gathers. A power that does not demand sacrifice—it becomes it.

And that kind of power... is dangerous. Because, as Barretto points out, what empire fears most is not just rebellion—it is hope. A people who begin to believe that the world can change. A people who begin to imagine that another way is possible.

That's what happened on Palm Sunday two thousand years ago. And that's what's happening today. People are daring to hope. Daring to gather. Daring to say: this is not the world God intends.

But Palm Sunday also asks us to be honest. Because the same crowd that shouts “Hosanna” will, by the end of the week, stand at the foot of a cross—grieving, confused, and in some cases complicit in the very violence they once hoped to be saved from.

Which means this is not just about what we do out there. It's about who we are becoming. Are we being formed by truth—or by outrage? By compassion—or by fear? By the way of Jesus—or by the logic of Caesar? Because the road Jesus walks—the road into Jerusalem, the road to the cross—is not just a road of protest. It is a road of formation. It teaches us what salvation actually looks like. It looks like solidarity with the vulnerable. It looks like courage without cruelty. It looks like resistance without dehumanization. It looks like love that refuses to let go—even when the cost is everything.

So yes—today, we wave our palms. Today, we shout “Hosanna.” Today, some of us will march, or pray, or stand alongside those who are putting their bodies on the line for the sake of justice.

But Palm Sunday will not let us stop there. Because the question it puts before us has less to do with whether we can still shout “Hosanna”...and more to do with whether we, collectively, have the courage to mean something different by salvation than Caesar does. Whether we will settle for a victory that comes at someone else's expense—or whether we will follow Jesus all the way down that road...into a salvation that looks like justice, and mercy, and courage, and love. It's not an easy path, but it IS an easy choice.

To quote the book of Joshua, “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

May it be so for all of us. Amen.

Commissioning and Benediction

Today, you are stepping onto the path of sages and prophets. Not as spectators. Not as bystanders. But as people who dare to believe that love is stronger than fear, that truth is stronger than lies, that justice is stronger than any empire.

So as you go, we want you to carry a blessing with you—one we will speak together. When I gesture for the congregation to speak, you say, “We will show up.”

Let’s try it.

For love—**We stand together in hope.**

For justice—**We stand together in hope.**

For the people—**We stand together in hope.**

(Repeat once, stronger, louder)

Now hear this: Go in courage—not the absence of fear, but the refusal to let fear have the last word.

We stand together in hope.

Go in compassion—not weakness, but the fierce commitment to every human being’s dignity.

We stand together in hope.

Go in hope—not wishful thinking, but the stubborn, defiant belief that another world is possible.

We stand together in hope.

And as you go, remember this: You do not go alone. You go with one another. You go with all who have marched and prayed and resisted before you. You go with the prophets. You go with the Spirit. You go with the One who rode into Jerusalem without violence and did not turn back.

So go—with your voices ready, your hearts open, your courage steady. Go and cry out, “Hosanna—save us now”—not with hatred, not with domination, but with a love that refuses to let the world stay as it is. And may God bless your feet on the road, your lungs as you raise your voices, and your hearts as you refuse to give up on one another.

Go in courage—**We stand together in hope.**

Go in compassion—**We stand together in hope.**

Go in hope—**We stand together in hope.**

Go with courage in your bodies. Go with truth on your lips. Go with love leading the way.

We stand together in hope.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we humbly pray. Amen.

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