

Palm Sunday

Why Palm Sunday matters, what was actually happening, and what it means to welcome Jesus as King

SPEAKER	Steve Hawthorne
DATE	Sunday, March 29, 2026
PASSAGES	Zechariah 9; Psalm 118; Luke 19; John 12; 1 Kings 1
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:06:48 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Palm Sunday is not just an entry or a parade — it is the moment Jesus was openly received as King, fulfilling prophecies from Zechariah and the Psalms in detail. The crowds were not launching a revolution, but acknowledging God's chosen one. Palm Sunday is an invitation to receive Jesus for who he is, not just for what he can do — a King who brings salvation and fullness, not just for individuals, but for whole peoples and families.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Palm Sunday was Jesus' most public moment, deliberately arranged to fulfill prophecy and declare his kingship.
- ◆ The crowds welcomed Jesus as King by quoting [Psalm 118:25–26](#), calling out “Hosanna!” — a plea for salvation, not just a shout of praise.
- ◆ The donkey was not a symbol of humility alone, but a royal sign from Israel's own tradition, echoing Solomon's anointing in [1 Kings 1](#).
- ◆ What happened on Palm Sunday shook the city and triggered the events that led to Jesus' crucifixion, not because of political revolution, but because of open recognition of Jesus as King.
- ◆ The prayers and songs of Palm Sunday are double pleas — not just for rescue, but for fullness, for God to bring his purposes to completion among every people.

- ◆ Receiving Jesus as King is not just about asking for help; it is about welcoming the fullness of his life, love, and purpose for us and for our families and peoples.
- ◆ The fulfillment of prophecy in Palm Sunday is an invitation to see God's purposes working through generations and to ask boldly for more than survival — for transformation.
- ◆ “Hosanna” is a doubled, intensified prayer: not just “save,” but “super save us!” And the prayer for “fullness” is an urgent call for God to push his purposes to completion, not merely survive.

► 1:06:48

Steve Hawthorne opened by noting that Palm Sunday is often overlooked or misunderstood, sometimes overshadowed by Christmas or Easter, despite being the most public moment in Jesus' earthly life. He invited the congregation to stand and participate in reading, emphasizing the communal and responsive nature of Palm Sunday itself — a public recognition of Jesus and a call for God's action.

What actually happened on Palm Sunday?

► 1:08:40

Palm Sunday was not a random event or a minor episode. Steve stressed that all four Gospels reach a crescendo at this moment, devoting more space to this cluster of events than even the birth of Jesus. Unlike the “triumphal entry” of Roman generals — often parades of violence and conquest — Jesus' entry was a deliberate, prophetic act. He arranged for crowds to gather at the temple grounds, teaching day after day as people pressed in for Passover. This was a planned, multi-day event, not simply a spontaneous parade.

► 1:09:40

Steve explained that while Jesus usually avoided crowds and withdrew to quiet places, here he orchestrated a public, unmistakable claim. The event was not a “triumph” in the Roman sense — it was not a victory march with prisoners and violence, but it did trigger fierce opposition, especially from the religious leaders. “This is not a shallow political insurrection,” Steve insisted. The crowds were not trying to launch a revolution; they were recognizing something bigger — and it was this recognition that led to the plot to kill Jesus ([Luke 22:2](#)).

The meaning of the donkey: Royal sign, not just humility

► 1:11:59

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey... He shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.”

ZECHARIAH 9:9–10 ↗

Jesus’ choice of a donkey was not accidental or merely a gesture of humility. Steve pointed out that in Israel’s story, a donkey was the royal mount — the animal of David and Solomon. When David’s son Adonijah attempted a coup, David ordered Solomon to ride the royal donkey to Gihon, where he was anointed king. This was the public sign of legitimate kingship (1 Kings 1:32–40).

“And they brought Solomon down to Gihon. There Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, ‘Long live King Solomon!’ And all the people went up after him, playing on pipes, and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth was split by their noise.”

1 KINGS 1:38–40 ↗

► 1:12:59

By riding a donkey down the Mount of Olives, across the Kidron Valley, and into Jerusalem, Jesus was deliberately reenacting Solomon’s coronation. The crowds, aware of the symbolism, responded not by accident but by deliberate recognition of Jesus as the awaited “Son of David.”

Why did the crowds shout “Hosanna”? What did it mean?

► 1:14:04

“Save us, we pray, O Lord! O Lord, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We bless you from the house of the Lord.”

PSALM 118:25–26 ↗

Steve unpacked the word “Hosanna,” explaining that it is not a generic cheer but a plea for rescue — “Save us, please!” The Hebrew “hoshia na” is an intensified, urgent prayer. The crowd was quoting Psalm 118:25–26, a psalm sung at Passover and deeply familiar. The word “Hosanna” is found only in this passage in the Old Testament. “It means to super-save us, not just a ticket to heaven, but salvation for whole families, peoples, and nations,” Steve said.

He noted how the Gospels record slight variations — “Hosanna to the Son of David,” “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David,” or “Hosanna in the highest” — each adding layers of meaning. The crowd saw this as God’s moment of fulfillment and responded with the language of worship and hope.

Palm Sunday’s impact: Not a political revolution, but a spiritual turning point

► 1:15:14

Jesus’ public arrival shook the city and forced the hand of those who opposed him. The religious leaders did not fear a Roman overthrow but feared the recognition of Jesus as King. “The chief priests and scribes... were seeking how they might put him to death, but they were afraid of the people” (Luke 22:2). Steve emphasized that this was not a failed political uprising, but a moment when the true nature of Jesus’ kingship was revealed — a kingship that brings peace and salvation “from sea to sea... to the ends of the earth” (Zechariah 9:10).

Even the disciples did not fully understand what was happening at the time. Only after Jesus was glorified — raised and exalted — did they remember and recognize the fulfillment of prophecy (John 12:16).

The double prayer of Palm Sunday: Rescue and fullness

► 1:15:23

Steve highlighted that the Palm Sunday prayers from Psalm 118 are not just pleas for rescue, but also for God to “bring things to fulfillment” — to push his purposes to completion. He explained, “‘Hosanna’ is not just ‘save us’ — the Hebrew ‘hoshia na’ is a double intensifier: ‘really, really, we’re desperate, we’ve got to have it!’” He pointed out that in the Hebrew, adding ‘na’ before and after the verb stacks up the urgency and intensity of the prayer. “It’s a super-save us. Not just me, but us, families, peoples, nations. Not just a ticket to heaven, but ‘save us more and better than we’ve ever been saved before.’”

Steve also explained the second prayer, sometimes translated as “give us success” or “prosperity,” is an equally urgent call: “Push it, push it faster, push it harder. Make it greater. Help it get to where it’s going to go. Where are we going with this? Let’s get there!” He urged, “It’s not just save us from the worst — it’s to bring out the best. Come on, God, the gifts and glories you want to bring forth on families and peoples, bring it all.”

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

PSALM 118:22-24 ↗

He read from [Psalm 118:22-24](#), “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord’s doing and it’s marvelous in our eyes.” Steve reminded, “This is on Jesus’ mind at Palm Sunday. Three or four days later, he quoted it to his enemies.” He clarified, “This is the day the Lord has made” is not just a 24-hour period, but “a season where God is working out his purposes across generations. It’s a marvelous thing that he’s doing — the day the Lord has made is when he does amazing things.”

He described the stone imagery, “You’re always looking for a rock — not the cornerstone, usually the top stone where the arch would be... the rock that got rejected, it got promoted to the chief place. This is God’s doing. It’s going to happen. It’s going to be fulfilled. So O Lord, save — yes, hosanna! — and bring things quickly to fulfillment, the finish.”

Receiving Jesus: Not just rescue, but the fullness of his life and purpose

► 1:15:42

Steve called the congregation to “receive Jesus in such a way that we’re saying: Come on, Jesus, don’t just rescue me from what’s going wrong — bring forth the beauty and the life and the love that you have in mind. Fulfill all your purpose because God has a point and a goal and a hope for every people, every family, he wants to bring it. And when Jesus... that’s what he does with his kingship — he’s going to bring it.”

He invited everyone to think of “two prayers to receive Jesus: Say yes, you came — but it could mean you’re going to come again, to whole cities and families. He can save me more than I’ve ever been saved. Come on, Jesus. This is not about being a better religionist. No, he wants us to be fulfilled with his life and his love.”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We bless you from the house of the Lord.”

PSALM 118:26 ↗

He asked, “What is the point, the purpose God has for your life or your family’s life? Do you know what kind of hope, what kind of joy he could bring? That is one of the ways we can receive Jesus and not just

have a donkey ride.” With a moment of humor, Steve said, “That one’s better than Shrek has. Shrek had a donkey, but he had to be there. But Jesus is going to bring it.”

“Hosanna” and “Bring fullness”: A two-handed prayer

► 1:16:16

Steve led the congregation in a physical response: “If you could hold your hands out like this — your right hand, that’s your ‘Hosanna’ hand.” He continued, “There’s someone I know, she’s really got a need. She needs saved. Come on, God, you can do it.” Then, “On your other hand: push it to the end. Come on, God.” He encouraged everyone, “You could be thinking of your right hand — there’s someone who needs saved. And then your left — bring things to fullness in their life.”

He prayed aloud, “Lord Jesus, you came and they shouted hosanna to you — and it was correct. You really want to bring rescue and salvation. So we want to ask you for ourselves and for the people we have in mind: O God, rescue them. Save them more than they’ve ever thought. They know they’re going to heaven maybe or something, but no — save them. Rescue them. And then push things to the fullness in their life.”

He added, “Some of the countries that we stood and called out earlier, we can ask you: come on, Lord Jesus. You’re the one, the king, not just of a country. You’re the king of the world. It’s not just a rock song — that’s a real thing. So we ask you, Lord Jesus, come.”

He led the congregation in saying, “Could you say ‘Hosanna!’” and then, “‘Bring fullness!’” The congregation responded aloud.

► 1:16:38

Steve closed in prayer: “So Lord Jesus, you’ve heard us and we want to ask for you to be exalted in this kind of way and all the fullness... We’re not asking to get fixed up for another week so we can do bad things again or something. No, we want you to be loved and served in all the places of the earth. So we ask in your name to hear us and receive us. So receive Jesus.” He then invited anyone needing prayer to come forward to the heart ministry teams and dismissed the congregation: “Go and be blessed.”

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [Zechariah 9:9–10](#)
- [Psalm 118:22–26](#)
- [Luke 19:37–40](#)
- [John 12:12–16](#)
- [John 12:16](#)
- [1 Kings 1:32–40](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. How did the crowds' actions and words on Palm Sunday show they recognized Jesus as King? What did "Hosanna" mean to them?
2. What difference does it make to see Palm Sunday as the fulfillment of prophecy — not just a parade, but a royal announcement?
3. Steve described Palm Sunday's prayers as double pleas — for rescue and for fullness. Which do you find yourself praying more often? Why?
4. In what ways does receiving Jesus as King go beyond personal rescue? What might it mean for your family, city, or people group?
5. What is one area where you need to ask not just for God's help, but for his fullness and purpose to be worked out this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Steve Hawthorne has been invited to teach on Palm Sunday at Hope Chapel for many years, bringing insight into the biblical and prophetic meaning of the day. He is known in the congregation as a friend and mentor, and is recognized globally as an editor and teacher in the Perspectives on the World Christian Movement. At Hope, he is simply "Steve," valued for his ability to illuminate scripture and its implications for the church and the world.

Watch the full message:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPwFzLfa_BI&t=4008s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.