

The City Church, New York

The Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession – April 9, 2006 Palm Sunday

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem fulfilled Zachariah's 500-year-old oracle of the word of YAHWEH: "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! ... Look, your King comes to you, righteous and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus: On this Palm Sunday morning, we join our voices with those in Jerusalem's streets nearly 2,000 years ago. We, too, call out: "Hosanna! Save us!" Our expression of longing echoes theirs. And yet, Lord, ours is more than an echo, for we know now what they could not know then. We know that a narrow nationalistic dream was not what You had on Your mind that day. You'd set Your face toward self-sacrifice and sensed the nightmare of horrors You'd chosen to endure for we were on Your mind that day. And before the glad morning of true victory for which You trusted the Father, You faced the cross. So today, we sing the joyful sound more heartily than they. We lift up Your Name with billions of brothers and sisters through the ages and across the globe and on into ages without end. Our chorus of unnumbered saints – each, though, known to You – calls out in thankful prayer and praise: "Hosanna! Save us!"

And yet Lord, we, too, can miss, as they did, that lurking beyond the excitement and anticipation of a too easy victory there are pitfalls of cheap grace that fail to prepare us for those who hate us because they hate You. Give us the courage to go through the intervening days of temptation and trial. May we sense You with us in each Gethsemane of our sojourn. Rouse us from slumbering to serious discipleship. And help us, too, to pray: "Not my will, but Yours, O Father." Give to each one here the wisdom in humility to follow You, setting our faces steadfastly toward obedience, taking up the cross as You call us to do, and going on to the only Real Life there is, Life by the uphill way of Calvary. And recalling Your weeping over that city, may we weep over ours.

So: "Ride on, King Jesus, ride on!" And may we be fit to ride with You until this pilgrimage is past and we enter the Holy City, the New Jerusalem that will never pass away, where we shall be at Home at last, with You, in Father's House.

We pray in Your name, adding words You taught us to pray to Your Father and ours.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.