

Blessed is He Who Comes in the Name of the Lord

A festival talk by the Rev. Mark D. Pendleton
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It was Palm Sunday; and over here we have a scene that shows what was happening on that day (pointing to a large representation of the Lord riding into Jerusalem). And if you can imagine yourself being in the city of Jerusalem just before the Lord rode into the city, then you can also imagine the energy, excitement, and anticipation that would have been in the air as throngs of people waited for the Lord's arrival.

The disciples brought the donkey and its colt; they put some of their clothing on them; they set the Lord on top of their clothing. And when the Lord came into Jerusalem, hundreds (or even thousands) of people were there to meet Him. They too took off articles of clothing, and they laid them on the road in his path. Still others were there who cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. There were many people who walked ahead of the Lord, and many who followed after Him, and they all cried out. "Hosanna!" "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Hosanna in the highest!"

But there was something else they cried out as well, and that's what we're going to talk about today. As I read the story, see if you can hear what else it was that all those people cried out that day.

(Read Matthew 21:1-11.)

Did you hear what they all shouted? They shouted, "Hosanna!" (an expression of honor and praise that means, "Lord, save us, we pray!") But what was the *other* thing they cried out? "Blessed is He!" "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

That's what we're going to talk about today. We're going to talk about blessings in our lives, and also about the Lord Himself, who is the source of all our blessings.

But before we do that, I want to read some things that are said about blessings from the Writings for the New Church, and then you'll be invited to listen to some pretty music.

Readings:

In the Word, in the external sense, "blessing" means being enriched with all earthly and bodily good. This is also how all people who keep to the external sense explain the Word. Consequently they focus the Divine blessing on wealth, on having plenty of everything, and on personal glory. But in the internal sense "blessing" means being

enriched with all spiritual and celestial good, and this is a blessing which neither does nor can possibly exist unless it comes from the Lord. (*Arcana Caelestia* 981)

In order for worldly, bodily, and earthly good to be a blessing, it is vital that they derive from internal blessing, which is celestial and spiritual good, for this alone is real blessing. It is eternal, and it is joined with all happiness. It is the essence of all blessings. (*Arcana Caelestia* 1096:1)

In the Word, “the blessing of the Lord” implies countless benefits and gifts which flow in from the Lord, such as enrichment with spiritual and heavenly good; fruitfulness resulting from the affection for truth; undergoing rearrangement into heavenly order; being endowed with the good of love and thereby being joined to the Lord; and joy. (*Arcana Caelestia* 4981)

In the Word, “blessing the Lord” implies singing to Him, proclaiming His salvation, declaring His wisdom and power, and so confessing and acknowledging Him from the heart. In early times it was customary to say “Blessed be Jehovah,” by which people meant that every blessing, that is, all good, flows from the Lord. It was also a way of expressing thanks for the Lord's having blessed them. (*Arcana Caelestia* 1422:2, 1096:1)

In the Word, “a cry” is an action which corresponds to a living confession or an acknowledgement that is a product of faith. Since this is so, crying out was also the custom followed by the ancients when an outward sign of such confession or acknowledgement needed to be made. The expression “crying out” is therefore used in various places in the Word to mean an acknowledgement that is the product of faith and consequently acceptance rising out of the acknowledgement. (*Arcana Caelestia* 5323:3)

(Interlude)

Hundreds (or even thousands) of people were there, and they all cried out, “Hosanna to the son of David!” “Blessed is **He!**” “Blessed is **He** who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest!”

It's true, the Lord Jesus was a blessed Person. And I want you to hold that thought in your mind for a minute—we'll come back to it—because first, I want to talk with you about blessings in your own life—ways in which you yourself have been blessed, or things that make you *feel* blessed.

Sometimes when good things happen in our lives, we say, “That was a blessing in my life,” or “The Lord has blessed me today.” The good things that happen don’t have to be big or important things in order to feel like blessings:

- The sun is shining.
- The birds are singing.
- I found \$20 dollars in a parking lot.
- I struck it rich in the lottery.
- I have a car in my driveway, a roof over my head, and food on the table.
- My body is healthy and functioning as it should.
- My family members are physically safe and secure.
- The business deal went through as I hoped it would.

When these kinds of things happen we may think, “I’ve been blessed,” or, “What a blessing!” We may even take time to count the number of blessings we experience in a day or week’s time. We “count our blessings.”

Well the Lord tells us that these things really *are* blessings. They are blessings on a worldly or earthly level. But then there are blessings that are even bigger and better, and these are blessings that happen *inside* of us—in our hearts and minds, between us and the Lord, or between us and other people. In fact, sometimes we can spend so much time thinking or focusing on the *outward* blessings that happen in our lives—like the weather, or money, or business deals, that we may *forget* these deeper, more important blessings in our lives, or we may not even notice that they’re happening.

What are some of these deeper blessings? Well, if you look on your chairs you’ll see a list of just some of the deeper blessings the Lord gives to us (see attached).

Real Blessings

(A Partial List)

1. Celestial goodness
 - a. Love to the Lord
2. Spiritual goodness
 - a. Charity (love, good will) to the neighbor
3. Natural goodness
 - a. Good done from faith
 - b. Contentment in life
 - 1) Resting content in God
 - 2) Content with one's position and amount of wealth, whatever these may be
4. Eternal things
5. Care about what is good
6. Care about what is true
7. Increases in goodness and truth
8. Increases in life and understanding
9. Look less and less to oneself for leadership and guidance and more to the Lord
10. Look less and less to reward or remuneration as primary motivators
11. Look increasingly to the delight in perceiving truth of faith and doing good works of love
12. The Lord...
 - a. Hears our prayers
 - b. Has mercy on us
 - c. Does wonderful things
 - d. Teaches us
 - e. Gives us what to think each moment
 - f. Re-arranges things into heavenly order
 - g. Trains our hands
 - h. Comes to us
 - i. Brings deliverance
 - j. Protects us from what is hurtful (evil) and false
 - k. Withdraws us from the selfish side of ourselves
 - l. Makes our lives fruitful
 - m. Regenerates us
 - n. Endows us with heaven
 - o. Endows us with the good of love
 - p. Joins us to what is good
 - q. Joins us to Him
 - r. Endows us with salvation and eternal life
 - s. Gives us feelings of joy

These are some of the real and deep blessings that the Lord gives to us on a regular basis, and they're so real and so deep that when some of the other kind of blessings don't happen in our lives—like good health and plenty of money—these deeper blessings can help us keep doing the best we can in our lives, believing that somehow everything will be all right in the end.

So really, what makes us feel blessed in our lives is not so much the *outward* blessings that we often think about, but the deeper, more internal blessings that the Lord gives us. Without those deeper blessings the outward ones often don't seem quite as meaningful. But when those deeper blessings are happening, the outward ones often feel fully meaningful and yummy. In fact, if those deeper blessings in our lives were like a *cake*, the outward blessings in our lives would be like the *icing* on the cake [shows a sheet cake decorated with the word "Blessings" written across it].

But remember, when the Lord Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, *what* did the people all say? They said, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is **He!**" "Blessed is **He** who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!" And it's true, the Lord Jesus was a Person who was blessed. His life was blessed on the *outside*, just like you and me. But He was also blessed on the inside. In fact, by the love and faithfulness that were in His heart and mind, and by the good and wise choices He made for His life, He was so blessed on the *inside* that He actually *became* the One who gives us *all* of our blessings! He became the *source* of all blessings for all of humankind.

And whether the people who cried out to Him knew of it or not, *that's* what their words were actually saying, "Blessed is **He!**" **He** is the One who is blessed, and **we** are blessed by Him and from Him.

And do you know, *that's* why the Lord came on earth?! A *that's* why He rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. He came on earth to make all of the very best life choices so that He could be a blessing in each one of our lives—so that each one of us could be blessed as well—from inside out.

So next time you're feeling or experiencing some of the outward blessings in your life, let's not forget the deeper blessings the Lord is giving you as well! Let's *work* for those deeper blessings, so that they can happen in our lives. (They're what make all *other* blessings seem worthwhile!) And let's not forget to look to the Lord and to ask Him to give us those deeper blessings—because **He's** the one who can do so.

"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" Amen.