

Palm Sunday Symbols: What We Celebrate and Why It Is Full of Praise

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Palm Sunday marks the joyful and triumphal entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem, where He was greeted as the promised Messiah. Not only was it a public moment of praise, but it was also a fulfillment of prophecy.

Just as the symbols of Christmas—like stars, shepherds' canes, and Nativity scenes—help us know the storyline and feel the spirit of that season, the symbols of Palm Sunday can remind us of the day's events and prepare our hearts for Holy Week.

Let's explore the symbols of Palm Sunday, what they teach about the Savior, and how we can include them in meaningful traditions.

A Young Donkey: A Sign of a King

When we think of a king, we might imagine a crown or a chariot. But for the people of ancient Jerusalem, a donkey had royal meaning, too. Centuries before, the prophet Zechariah prophesied that the Messiah would enter Jerusalem "riding on a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9, New International Version), just as King Solomon once had.

As Jesus left Jericho and approached Jerusalem, he sent two of his disciples ahead with a task. He told them, "Go into the nearby village, and when you enter, you'll find a young colt tied up, one that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it to me. If anyone asks why you're taking it, just say, 'The Lord needs it'" (Luke 19:28-31, NIV).

When the people of Jerusalem saw Christ arriving on a young donkey, they likely understood the symbolism. Here was the One who had healed the blind and raised the dead. Now, He was arriving just as prophecy foretold, in humble majesty, fulfilling the words of ancient scripture. Many people placed their coats on the ground for the donkey to walk over (Mark 11:7). The message was clear: The King had come. No wonder it was a time of rejoicing!

A simple donkey craft or a king's crown displayed can remind us Jesus is our king. Good kings reign with power, bringing deliverance and protection, and their people respond with gratitude. Taking a moment to ponder, or even act out, how we might respond if royalty entered our street can help us step into the mindset of the people in Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday. Naturally, we may bow with respect and reverence. The

Christian hymn proclaims, *“Rejoice, the Lord is King; your Lord and King adore... He rules o’er earth and heaven”* (Hymn 66). Those words ring especially true on Palm Sunday.

Palm Fronds: A Symbol of Victory

As Jesus rode through the streets, many people cut palm branches and spread them before Him or waved them in praise.

Palm branches are a powerful symbol in Jewish culture, signifying victory, joy, and deliverance. For example, in the book of Revelation, John describes a future vision of “a great multitude” in white robes, waving palm branches and praising the Lamb of God (Revelation 7:9).

On that first Palm Sunday, the waving of palms was an act of reverence, adoration, and joyful expectation.

Palm fronds can also be included in our Easter celebrations today. It can be meaningful to wave actual palm branches, commemorating Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem with our families or ward members. But even if we don’t incorporate the literal symbol, we can still imagine ourselves in the crowd and what it may have felt like to victoriously acknowledge the Savior’s role as our Deliverer and our King.

Shouts of “Hosanna!”: A Plea and a Praise

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the crowd exclaimed: “Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord!” (Luke 19:38).

The word *hosanna* literally means “save now.” It’s both a plea for help and an exclamation of praise. Elder Gerrit W. Gong explained, “Hosanna is our plea for God to save.” Hosanna is praise and awe, combined with a humble petition to grant salvation only He can give.

Whether we read the scriptural account to put ourselves in the figurative shoes of the people shouting Hosanna at that Triumphal Entry or simply ponder what it feels like to sincerely praise the Lord today, we can feel the joy, reverence, and sense of victory that was in the air. As we do, we join that ancient crowd in acknowledging the saving power of Jesus Christ. This kind of [intentional worship](#) has the power to “[transform] us,” as Elder Patrick Kearon has taught.

A Chorus of Rocks: All Creation Praises

When the crowd praised Jesus, some of the Pharisees told Jesus to rebuke His followers, deeming the praise inappropriate. But the Savior responded with a striking answer: “If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out” (Luke 19:40).

In simpler words, Jesus explained that if the people stopped shouting praises, then the stones would take up their place. What a powerful image to ponder, creation itself bursting into praise!

Jesus did not stop the people from shouting praises then, and He does not stop us today. As disciples of Christ, we can raise our voices in joyful acknowledgment of the Son of God. This message rings strong in the words of the Christian hymn: “All creatures of our God and King lift up your voice and with us sing, Hallelujah! Oh praise Him!” (Hymn 62).

A Community Gathering: Rejoicing In our Common Love for the Savior

Palm Sunday was not a private event. It was a large gathering, involving people of all ages, backgrounds, and religious beliefs who were eager to show their love and respect for Jesus. Matthew describes, “A very great multitude” gathered (Matthew 21:8); John records that the Pharisees exclaimed, “Behold, the world has gone after Him!” (John 12:19); and Matthew similarly writes, “the whole city was moved” (Matthew 21:10).

We recreate a part of history when, on Palm Sunday, we gather in a similar manner to rejoice in our common love of Jesus. For many in the city of Jerusalem, this may have been their first time seeing the man from Nazareth whose miracles they had heard about. They were likely filled with excitement, curiosity, and worship.

With whom will we gather to remember Palm Sunday? As we gather with fellow Church members, family and friends, and community leaders to worship the Savior, we can experience together the powerful spirit that comes with collective worship.

“This is Jesus”

When some in Jerusalem heard and saw the loud, exuberant praising of the Triumphal entry, “the whole city was stirred and asked, ‘Who is this?’ The disciples responded, ‘This is Jesus’” (Matthew 21:10,11, NIV).

Palm Sunday is both a celebration of joy in Jesus and a reminder of who He is. He is our King and our Deliverer. We can proclaim that powerful truth on Palm Sunday and throughout the rest of our lives.

As we embrace these powerful symbols, like the Savior’s ancient disciples we can help others recognize the Savior during this sacred season. Taking a moment to bear simple

testimony that Jesus is our King and our Deliverer, that he is the promised Messiah, and he did perform many mighty works. In the words of [a beloved Latter-day Saint hymn](#):
“With Saints of old in joyful cry / I too can testify: This is the Christ.”

Questions to Ponder or Discuss

- Do I recognize Jesus as my King and Deliverer?
- How can I welcome Christ to enter into my heart and my life more fully this season?
- What can I do to make my praises to the Lord be more joyful?
- Am I part of the chorus that praises Him, or have I let the metaphorical rocks “cry out” instead?
- How can I gather my family or community to rejoice in the Savior this Palm Sunday together?
- What visuals of these Palm Sunday symbols can become part of my Easter season decor to point me toward the Savior?