The image shows the interior of a large, ancient stone building, likely a church or sanctuary. The architecture features prominent arches supported by thick, weathered columns. The floor is made of large, light-colored stone tiles. The walls are decorated with intricate carvings and a checkered pattern of black and white tiles. A large, arched skylight with a wooden frame allows natural light to enter the space. A semi-transparent grey box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing text in a teal, cursive font.

*Sanctuary in
Jesus*

Week 1 - Part 1
Hosanna!

Hosanna!

Hosanna is a cry to God to “save us!” It’s often sung as praise because it comes from a place of being confident that God will respond, like a child shouting “catch me!” to a parent as they fling themselves off a swing.

The Jews praised Jesus as he arrived at Jerusalem riding on a donkey. He was right in front of them and they believed He could save them – so they sang out “Hosanna son of David!” aka “Save us our rightful king”.

They welcomed Him with open arms as their long-awaited Messiah.

But they were expecting a Messiah to free them from the occupation and oppression of Rome, but Jesus came to save them from sin and death.

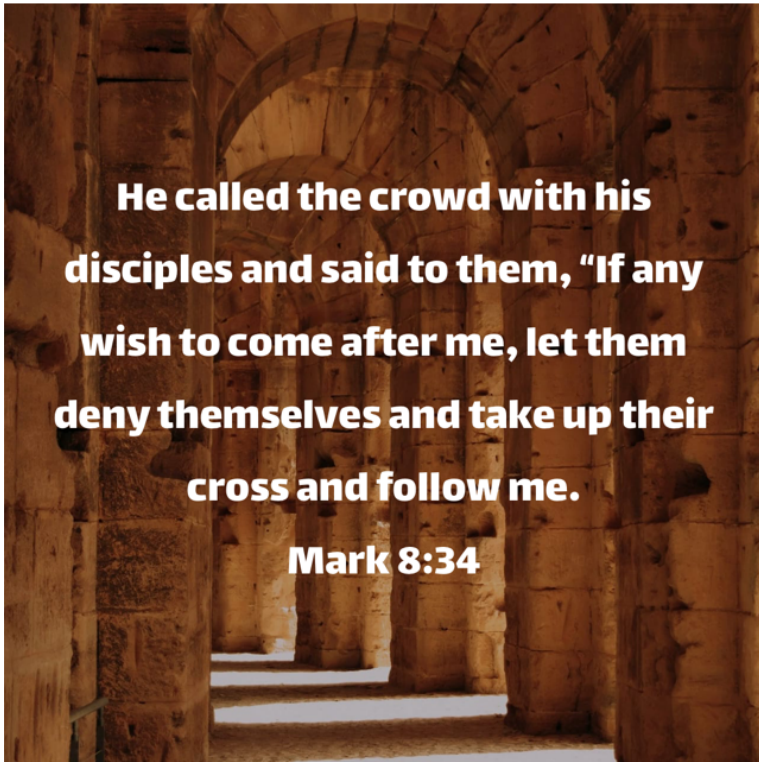
As humans we shape our expectations of what God should do in the events and experiences we have in the world. This means we also judge God’s character, power, and love but our circumstances. We equate our own personal happiness with His eternal goodness. We judge His action or inaction by how comfortable we feel in the moment. We base our opinions of who Jesus is on how things are going.

But like the people calling Hosanna on that first Palm Sunday, we often lack the perspective to understand what God is doing.

And like them one short week later, we often reject the very rescue He offers.

Your turn:

With your group, reflect on episode 1 and all the things the first century Jews were longing for, and then consider: What are *you* currently wanting God to be or do for you?



**He called the crowd with his
disciples and said to them, "If any
wish to come after me, let them
deny themselves and take up their
cross and follow me.**

Mark 8:34

The Better Thing

Rome's rule enforced a "peace" "Pax Romana" on their conquered lands. But they delivered peace through cultural suppression and military control. No wonder the Jews were desperate for relief.

Enter Jesus.

This man from Nazareth fulfilled all of prophecies about the Messiah, He healed people from every kind of disease, He preached with authority humans do not have towards God, and he baffled religious leaders who opposed Him. Just before He arrived in Jerusalem, he raised Lazarus from the dead.

Surely this was their guy!

So why, so soon after this do they reject Him?

The answer is simple and a little uncomfortable for us.

The Jews were there for the signs and miracles – the “magic” if you will. However, when Jesus began preaching in the temple, His explanation of the way forward was: to truly live and be free, they would have to deny themselves and take up their crosses.

The people began to grumble against Him.

When Jesus confronted the sin and corruption in the temple courts, they were downright offended and unrepentant.

Tragically, many of the people wanted their Messiah to deliver earthly things more than they wanted heavenly things. Most of us do too. Caught up in our busy lives, we want what we want, when we want it, and in doing so we miss the better thing Christ offers.

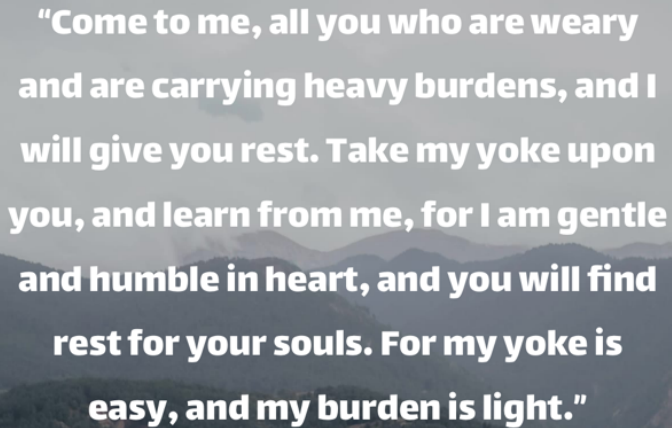
Your turn:

Discuss with your group:

In what ways have you denied yourself in order to take up your cross and follow Jesus?

In what ways have you not?

In what ways have you missed the better thing Jesus is offering you?



**“Come to me, all you who are weary
and are carrying heavy burdens, and I
will give you rest. Take my yoke upon
you, and learn from me, for I am gentle
and humble in heart, and you will find
rest for your souls. For my yoke is
easy, and my burden is light.”**

Matthew 11:28-30

Retreat

Where do you picture yourself being when you are completely at rest... a tropical beach, the silence of a mountain vista, or in the middle of a calm sea?

Our souls all long for retreat to a place of deep peace and rest that is impossible to find on Earth. Yet that was exactly what Jesus offered His followers - a perfect peace.

What could be better on this broken, sin-soaked, wearisome planet than to experience heavenly rest?

But when our soul cries out “Hosanna” how often do we comfort ourselves with earthly things?

Consider for a moment how much of what we struggle with and suffer from would be made right-sized by retreating to Jesus – His yoke, His rest – instead of trying to carry it all by ourselves.

Even those of us who know and love Him *still* try to rely on ourselves. We work hard to solve our own problems, to power through, hunker down, man up, stay positive, to schedule self-care, self-love, and self-protect and ultimately self-aggrandise.

How we try to be to ourselves! We try to be what we desperately need from Jesus.

All the while He waits patiently, willing and able to be our **stronghold**, the place we can rest, regroup, reassess, and realign our hearts with His.

Your turn...

List the things you long for that self-help has failed to satisfy.

In what aspect of your life do you desperately need Jesus-rest or rescue?

What would it look like for you to retreat to Him as your stronghold today?

For Bible Geeks (like us) Who Want to Know!

Hosanna is the word used to cry out for God's help. But interestingly it occurs as a word of praise not lament.

e.g. Psalm 106 closes with a Hosanna declaration:

"Hosanna, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your hold name and glory in your praise. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say 'Amen!' Praise the Lord!"

In such settings, there is so much hope in God that

the ones crying out "Hosanna" are actually celebrating.

That's what we find in Jesus' triumphal entry to Jerusalem - the crowd joyfully looking to Jesus to be their Stronghold in their time of need.