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The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith and Order

The Eighth Sunday of Zemene Tsom (*The Season of Lent*)

Liturgical Readings:

Hebrew 9:11; 1 Pet. 4: 1- 12; Acts 28: 11 -22

Psalm 8:2;

John 5:11

The Anaphora of Saint Gregory

“Hosanna”

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, today the Holy Scriptures lead us to contemplate the mystery of our Lord Jesus Christ as the humble King, the true High Priest, and the Saviour who is proclaimed with the cry of *Hosanna*. Saint Paul teaches us that *“Christ being come a high priest of good things to come”* entered not an earthly sanctuary but the greater and more perfect tabernacle, offering not the blood of animals but Himself for the life of the world. This truth illuminates the entry of Christ into Jerusalem, which is not merely a historical moment but a revelation of God’s saving purpose, fulfilled through humility, obedience, and sacrificial love.

When our Lord drew near to Jerusalem, He came first to Bethphage, a village whose name means *“the house of unripe figs,”* signifying a people not yet mature, awaiting fulfilment. From there He sent His disciples to bring a donkey tied, foretelling both the encounter and the response of its owners. When questioned, the disciples were to say, *“The Lord hath need of him,”* and immediately what was bound was released. In this we see the quiet authority of Christ, who does not seize but calls, and whose lordship brings freedom rather than coercion. All this took place so that the words of the prophet Zechariah might be fulfilled: *“Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass.”*

The Lord of lords and spirits entered therein riding upon the lowly colt of an ass. The choice of the donkey is not accidental. In the eyes of the world, it was an animal looked down upon, associated with labour and lowliness. Yet Christ chose it deliberately, revealing the nature of His kingship. He did not come as a warrior mounted on a horse, but as the Prince of Peace. The Prophet Isaiah foretold Him as one despised and rejected, having no outward beauty that men should desire Him. Our Lord Himself declared, *“Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.”* And yet, humility is not weakness. When Jehu was proclaimed king feet (2 Kings 9:13), the people laid their garments beneath him; so now the crowds spread their cloaks and palm branches on the road before Christ. The palms spoke of victory, not over earthly enemies, but over sin and death. What was once despised becomes the bearer of divine glory, just as fallen humanity is raised through the Incarnation.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the people cried aloud, *“Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”* The word *Hosanna* comes from the Psalmist’s plea, *“Save now, O Lord.”* It is a cry of urgency and hope, a prayer that God’s salvation would be made present. Many who cried these words longed to be saved from Roman domination, but Christ came to save humanity from a deeper bondage—the tyranny of sin and the power of eternal death. Thus, *Hosanna* is not only a political longing but a spiritual cry, echoing through the life of the Church whenever she calls upon her Lord for mercy and deliverance.

By calling Him the Son of David, the people bore witness—knowingly or unknowingly—to His identity as the Messiah. Throughout the Gospel, this title is a confession of faith: the blind cry out to the Son of David for mercy, and the crowds wonder whether He might indeed be the promised one. They also proclaimed, *“Blessed be the kingdom of our father David,”* recalling the covenant God made with David, that his throne would endure forever. In the days of Samuel, the people rejected God as their direct ruler and demanded a king like the nations. Though warned, they were given Saul, who was found herding donkeys, a sign of leadership shaped by human desire rather than divine will. When Saul was rejected, God raised up David, and the throne of David became the visible sign of the Kingdom of God. To David it was promised that from his seed would come an everlasting King, and this promise was proclaimed by Saint Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, that her Son would reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there would be no end. That promise finds its fulfilment not in earthly power, but in Christ who reigns from the Cross.

When Jesus entered the Temple, the children continued to cry *Hosanna*, and the chief priests were troubled, demanding that He silence them. Yet the Lord answered with the words of the Psalm: *“Out of the mouth of babes and suckling’s hast thou ordained strength”* Here we learn that God perfects His praise through humility and purity, and that what the wise in their pride reject, the simple proclaim with clarity. The praise of the children reveals the blindness of hardened hearts and the power of innocent faith.

Yet we know that the same city which welcomed Him with palms would soon cry for His crucifixion. Saint Peter reminds us that Christ suffered for us in the flesh, leaving us an example. The path of salvation passes through suffering, endurance, and obedience. Saint Paul, arriving in Rome in chains, continued to proclaim the Kingdom of God, showing us that neither rejection nor hardship can silence the truth of the Gospel. This is the way of Christ and the way of His Church.

Beloved faithful, from this holy mystery we learn that the Kingdom of God is not built on pride, force, or earthly glory, but on humility, faith, and self-giving love. To cry *Hosanna* is to ask Christ to save us now—from our sins, from our fears, and from the death that separates us from God. Let us therefore receive our King not only with words, but with lives shaped by repentance and obedience. Let us lay down before Him the garments of pride and selfishness, and follow Him in humility, that we may also share in His resurrection and eternal reign.

To Him be glory, honour, and worship, now and forever.

Glory to the Almighty God!

Amen.