

Hosanna!

By [Steve Pankey](#)

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As my children get older, the time we spend listening to CDs of children's music grows shorter and shorter. I can't say I'm that sad to see this particular era of their lives go away: listening to "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" on repeat can get a little monotonous; but still, like every phase in their young lives, there is some wistfulness for the way things were. That, and the ever repeating HSK&T has merely been replaced by "Shake it Off" or some other bubblegum pop song. There is still one CD that gets lots of airtime in Mommy's Car, the surprising combination of Fisher Price's Little People and Sunday School Classics.

Featured on this album are such classics as "Arky, Arky," "Father Abraham," and "Give me Oil in my Lamp (Sing Hosanna)," which our music minister, JKT, has declared "a perfect Palm Sunday song." I'm not sure of that, but this is the "perfect Christian song lyric video."

Sunday School songs are full of teaching opportunities, and "Give me Oil" is no exception. The word that makes up most of the refrain, a word we will hear repeated during the Liturgy of the Palms this Sunday, *hosanna*, is one of the church words that we use, but I wonder how many people actually know what it means. The *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* defines Hosanna as "(Heb. 'O save now!' Greek form of the Jewish cry used in the procession of the Feast of the Booths (Ps 118.25-26). In the New Testament it is associated with the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday)." Bibleworks translates it as "Save, we pray!"

Hosanna is a cry of a people totally dependent upon God. Its use in the Festival of the Booths serves as a reminder of the Israelites 40 years in the wilderness when food and water came from the hand of God alone. Hosanna, Save us, we pray, is the cry of a people who realize that it is only by the hand of God that salvation is possible. It is a peculiar cry for those of us who live in ease in 21st-century America; a people who often forget that our gifts aren't the result of our own hard work, but rather, the effect of God's saving grace poured out upon us.

Every Palm Sunday we are reminded that Holy Week is the story of God's saving love for us. We cry out, "save us," and God does so, even as moments later we cry out "crucify him." The irony is that the cross, a torture device inflicted on God by humans just like us, is ultimately what saves the world. Hosanna indeed.

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