

5-Day Devotional: Through the Eyes of a Child

Day 1: The Parade You've Been Waiting For

Read: Matthew 21:1-5

"Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" - Matthew 21:5

Imagine waiting for the biggest parade of your life. You've heard the stories, read the prophecies, and anticipated this moment for years. Then it arrives—and the grand marshal is riding a lawnmower.

That's essentially what happened on Palm Sunday. The Jews expected their Messiah to arrive on a war horse, dressed in royal armor, ready to overthrow Rome. Instead, Jesus came on a borrowed donkey, fulfilling the ancient prophecy from Zechariah. It wasn't what they expected, but it was exactly what God promised.

How often do we miss what God is doing because it doesn't match our expectations? We pray for provision and expect a check in the mail, but God sends a friend with a meal. We ask for strength and expect to feel powerful, but God gives us grace to be weak. We want the war horse; God sends the donkey.

The children in the crowd didn't care about expectations. They saw Jesus and celebrated. They weren't disappointed by the mode of transportation—they recognized the King.

Reflect:

- Where in your life are you waiting for God to show up in a specific way?
- What if God is already at work, but it looks different than you expected?
- How can you recognize and celebrate what God is doing today, even if it's not what you anticipated?

Prayer: *God, forgive me for having such rigid expectations of how You should work. Give me eyes to see You in the unexpected, the humble, and the simple. Help me celebrate what You're doing, not what I think You should be doing. Like those children, let me recognize my King no matter how He arrives. Amen.*

Day 2: Joy Without the Footnotes

Read: Matthew 21:8-9

"And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'" - Matthew 21:9

"Hosanna" means "Oh, save!" It's a cry for help and a shout of praise wrapped into one. The crowds—especially the children—weren't holding back. They weren't concerned about who was watching or what the religious leaders thought. They saw Jesus and let their joy overflow.

When did we adults lose that?

We've added footnotes to our worship. "I'd praise God more, but the music is too contemporary." "I'd be more excited about church, but the parking is terrible." "I'd engage more deeply, but I'm not sure I agree with everything the pastor said three weeks ago."

Children don't worship with footnotes. They don't wait for perfect conditions. They don't need everything explained before they celebrate. They simply respond to what—or rather, who—they see.

The truth is, we've become consumers of worship rather than participants in it. We critique the performance instead of joining the parade. We analyze the theology instead of shouting "Hosanna!"

There's a place for thoughtful faith, for asking hard questions, for growing in understanding. But there's also a place for unfiltered joy. For celebration that doesn't wait for perfect circumstances. For praise that isn't contingent on getting everything we want.

Reflect:

- What "footnotes" have you added to your worship? What conditions do you place on your joy in Christ?
- When was the last time you praised God without analyzing or critiquing the experience?
- What would it look like to remove one footnote this week and simply celebrate Jesus?

Prayer: *Jesus, I confess that I've made worship about me—my preferences, my comfort, my understanding. Forgive me for the footnotes and conditions I've placed on my praise. You are worthy of celebration regardless of my circumstances or feelings. Help me worship You with the unfiltered joy of a child. Hosanna, Son of David! Amen.*

Day 3: Seeing Through the Chaos

Read: Matthew 21:12-14

"And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them." - Matthew 21:14

Picture the scene: Jesus has just overturned tables. Coins are rolling across the temple floor. Pigeons are flying everywhere. Money changers are scrambling. Religious leaders are fuming. It's absolute chaos.

And in the middle of it all, the children are still shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

Why? Because they saw what the adults missed. Yes, tables were flipped. Yes, there was disruption. But they also saw Jesus healing the blind. They watched Him help the lame walk. They witnessed the sick being made whole.

The religious leaders saw disorder. The children saw miracles.

Your life might feel chaotic right now. Maybe your finances are a mess. Maybe your relationships are strained. Maybe your health is uncertain. Maybe your plans have been completely upended. It's tempting to focus only on the overturned tables—the disruption, the confusion, the things that aren't going according to plan.

But what if Jesus is still healing in the midst of your chaos? What if He's working in ways you haven't noticed because you're too focused on what's been disrupted?

Children have a remarkable ability to see the good even when surrounded by mess. They can find joy in a cardboard box while adults stress about the expensive toy it contained. They see the rainbow while we complain about the rain.

Reflect:

- What chaos in your life is consuming your attention right now?
- Where might Jesus be working, healing, or restoring that you've overlooked?
- What would change if you looked for the miracles instead of just the mess?

Prayer: *Lord, my life feels chaotic, and I'm tempted to focus only on what's going wrong. Give me childlike eyes to see what You're doing in the middle of the mess. Help me notice the healing, the restoration, and the grace You're extending even when everything else feels upside down. I choose to look for You in the chaos. Amen.*

Day 4: Confident in the Face of Criticism

Read: Matthew 21:15-16

"But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' they were indignant, and they said to him, 'Do you hear what these are saying?' And Jesus said to them, 'Yes.'" - Matthew 21:15-16

The religious leaders were indignant—deeply offended and angry—at the children's praise. They demanded Jesus shut it down. But Jesus didn't just defend the children; He affirmed them, quoting Psalm 8:2: "Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise."

The children had confidence to praise Jesus even when the most powerful religious authorities in the land disapproved. They didn't stop worshiping because someone told them it was inappropriate. They didn't quiet down because important people were uncomfortable.

Here's the question: Do you have that same confidence?

It's easy to praise Jesus in church, surrounded by people who believe what you believe. But what about at work? At school? On social media? In your family gathering where half the people roll their eyes at faith?

We live in a culture that's increasingly "indignant" at open expressions of Christian faith. The message is clear: believe what you want privately, but don't be too public about it. Don't make others uncomfortable. Keep your faith to yourself.

But Jesus affirmed the children's public praise. He didn't tell them to tone it down or save it for the synagogue. He celebrated their boldness.

Childlike confidence doesn't mean being obnoxious or preachy. It means trusting Jesus enough to acknowledge Him openly, even when it's awkward. It means not hiding your faith to make others comfortable. It means having the courage to say, "Yes, I follow Jesus," when the room goes quiet.

Reflect:

- Where do you hide your faith to avoid disapproval or criticism?
- What would childlike confidence look like in your specific relationships and environments?
- What's one small step you could take this week to be more open about your faith?

Prayer: *Jesus, I confess that I often care more about what people think than what You think. I hide my faith to avoid awkwardness or criticism. Give me the confidence of those children—the boldness to praise You openly, even when others disapprove. You are worth any discomfort I might face. Help me trust You more than I fear them. Amen.*

Day 5: Becoming Like a Child

Read: Matthew 18:1-4

"Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." - Matthew 18:3-4

This is perhaps Jesus' most radical statement about childlike faith. It's not a suggestion or a nice idea—it's a requirement. Unless you become like a child, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

That's stunning. Jesus isn't saying we need more education, more theological degrees, more biblical knowledge, or more spiritual disciplines (though these have their place). He's saying we need to become like children.

So what does that mean practically?

Children trust easily. They don't need all the answers before they believe. When dad says, "I'll catch you," they jump. When mom says, "It's going to be okay," they believe her. They haven't yet learned to overthink everything or demand proof for every promise.

Children live in the present. They're not consumed with yesterday's failures or tomorrow's worries. They're fully present in the moment, experiencing life as it comes.

Children are quick to forgive. Watch kids on a playground. One minute they're fighting over a toy; the next minute they're best friends again. They don't hold grudges or keep score.

Children know they're dependent. They don't pretend to have it all together. They freely ask for help. They know they need someone bigger and stronger to take care of them.

Children have wonder. Everything is amazing to them. A butterfly, a puddle, a cardboard box—it's all cause for delight. They haven't become jaded or cynical.

This Palm Sunday, the children demonstrated all of these qualities. They trusted Jesus enough to praise Him. They were fully present in the moment. They weren't holding onto theological debates or religious politics. They knew they were dependent on Him. And they had wonder at the wonderful things He was doing.

The question is: Have you become too old, too sophisticated, too educated, or too hurt to have that kind of faith?

Jesus isn't calling you to be childish—immature, naive, or irresponsible. He's calling you to be

childlike—trusting, present, forgiving, humble, and full of wonder.

Reflect:

- Which childlike quality do you most need to recover: trust, presence, forgiveness, humility, or wonder?
- What has caused you to lose that quality? (Hurt? Disappointment? Pride? Intellectualism?)
- What would it look like to ask Jesus to restore childlike faith in that specific area?

Prayer: *Father, I've become too grown up for my own good. I've replaced childlike trust with skepticism, wonder with cynicism, and dependence with self-sufficiency. I've lost the joy of simply being Your child. Today, I ask You to help me turn and become like a child again. Restore my trust, my wonder, my ability to forgive quickly and ask for help freely. I want to enter Your kingdom not as an expert but as a child. Help me wave my palm branch and shout "Hosanna" with the same joy as those children in Jerusalem. Amen.*

This Week's Challenge:

Choose one area where you need to become more childlike in your faith:

- **Trust:** Pick one worry you've been carrying and consciously choose to trust God with it every time it comes to mind this week.
- **Presence:** Put away distractions during your time with God and be fully present, even if it's just for 10 minutes a day.
- **Forgiveness:** Forgive someone who hurt you—quickly, completely, like a child who doesn't keep score.
- **Humility:** Ask someone for help with something you've been trying to handle on your own.
- **Wonder:** Spend time outside looking for something that causes you to marvel at God's creation, and thank Him for it.

Remember: The same Jesus who welcomed the children's praise on Palm Sunday welcomes yours today. You don't have to be perfect, polished, or profound. Just bring your childlike heart and shout, "Hosanna!"

Blog Post: Through the Eyes of a Child - A Palm Sunday Reflection

When Kids Understand Jesus Better Than We Do

There's something profoundly uncomfortable about Matthew's account of Palm Sunday, and it has nothing to do with the donkey.

In Matthew 21, we find Jesus entering Jerusalem to the sound of "Hosanna! Son of David!"—a messianic declaration that this humble rabbi on a borrowed donkey is actually the King they've been waiting for. The crowd goes wild. Palm branches wave. Cloaks cover the road like a red carpet.

Then Jesus enters the temple and flips tables. Literally. Coins scatter. Pigeons fly. Religious commerce grinds to a halt. And in the middle of this chaotic scene, children are still shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

The religious leaders—the educated, the sophisticated, the theologically trained—are indignant. "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they demand of Jesus.

His response? "Yes. Have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise'?"

In other words: These kids get it, and you don't.

That's the uncomfortable part. Not the overturned tables or the disrupted commerce, but the revelation that children understood something about Jesus that the religious experts completely missed.

The Problem with Growing Up

Here's what I've noticed after years in ministry: We adults are really good at complicating faith.

We over-analyze our worship experiences. "The music was too loud." "The sermon was too long." "I didn't connect with that illustration." "The coffee was cold."

We intellectualize our relationship with God. "I'm still working through some theological questions." "I need to understand this doctrine better before I can fully commit." "There are some logical inconsistencies I'm struggling with."

We negotiate our obedience. "I'll serve when my schedule clears up." "I'll be more generous when I have more financial margin." "I'll share my faith when I'm better equipped."

Meanwhile, the children in Matthew 21 saw Jesus healing people and started shouting His praises. No theological framework required. No perfect conditions needed. No negotiation

offered.

They simply saw something wonderful and responded with joy.

Three Things Children Teach Us About Faith

1. Children Don't Over-Analyze Celebrations—They Jump In With Joy

When kids enter a party, they don't critique the decorations or complain about the music selection. They grab some cake and start dancing.

The Palm Sunday children didn't analyze whether Jesus' mode of transportation was sufficiently regal. They didn't debate the eschatological implications of His entry into Jerusalem. They saw their King and celebrated.

How much joy have we lost by turning every spiritual experience into something to be critiqued rather than enjoyed? How many encounters with God have we missed because we were too busy analyzing the packaging?

Yes, there's a place for thoughtful faith, for asking hard questions, for growing in understanding. But there's also a place for simple, unapologetic joy in the presence of Jesus.

2. Children See the Miracles, Not Just the Mess

The temple was in chaos. Tables overturned. Money everywhere. Religious leaders fuming. It would have been easy to focus on the disruption.

But the children noticed something else: Jesus was healing people. The blind could see. The lame could walk. The sick were being made whole.

Same scene, different focus.

Your life might be chaotic right now. Maybe your finances are a mess. Maybe your relationships are strained. Maybe your plans have completely fallen apart. It's easy to see only the overturned tables.

But what if Jesus is still working? What if He's healing something you haven't noticed because you're too focused on the disruption?

Children have a remarkable ability to find joy in the midst of mess. They see the rainbow while we complain about the rain. They find treasure in a cardboard box while we stress about the expensive toy it contained.

Maybe we need to borrow their eyes.

3. Children Have Confidence to Praise Jesus Even When Others Disapprove

The religious leaders told Jesus to silence the children. These were powerful people—the influencers, the authorities, the gatekeepers of religious respectability.

And the children kept praising anyway.

They had something we often lack: the confidence to openly worship Jesus regardless of who's watching or what they think.

When's the last time you praised Jesus at work? Mentioned His name at school? Posted something about your faith on social media that wasn't a generic inspirational quote?

We've become experts at keeping our faith private to avoid disapproval. We worship boldly on Sunday and quietly the rest of the week.

But Jesus affirmed the children's public praise. He didn't tell them to tone it down or save it for synagogue. He celebrated their boldness and quoted Scripture to defend it.

The Invitation

The Invitation

Jesus said in Matthew 18:3, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

That's not a suggestion. It's not a nice idea for those who are into that sort of thing. It's a requirement.

Unless you become like a child, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Think about what that means. Jesus isn't saying we need more theological education (though knowledge has its place). He's not saying we need more spiritual disciplines (though those matter too). He's saying we need to recover something we've lost in the process of growing up.

We need to trust like children trust. When dad says "jump," they jump—confident he'll catch them. They don't need all the answers before they believe. They haven't yet learned to overthink every promise or demand proof for every claim.

We need to live in the present like children do. They're not consumed with yesterday's failures or tomorrow's anxieties. They're fully engaged with whatever is right in front of them.

We need to forgive like children forgive. Watch kids on a playground. One minute they're

fighting over a toy; five minutes later they're best friends again. They don't keep score or hold grudges.

We need to embrace dependence like children do. They don't pretend to have it all together. They freely ask for help. They know they need someone bigger and stronger to take care of them.

We need to have wonder like children have. Everything is amazing to them. A butterfly. A puddle. A box. They haven't become jaded or cynical about the world around them.

What This Looks Like Practically

So how do we actually do this? How do we become childlike without being childish?

Start your day with wonder. Before you check your phone, before you dive into your to-do list, take 60 seconds to marvel at something. The fact that you woke up. That your heart is beating. That the sun rose again. That God calls you His child. Recover the ability to be amazed.

Celebrate without footnotes. The next time you're at church or in your quiet time with God, resist the urge to critique. Don't analyze the worship set. Don't mentally edit the sermon. Just be present and celebrate Jesus. Wave your palm branch—metaphorically or literally, I don't care—and shout "Hosanna!" with joy.

Look for the miracles in the mess. Whatever chaos you're navigating right now, ask God to show you where He's working. Keep a running list on your phone of the small ways you see Jesus healing, providing, or moving. Train your eyes to notice the good in the middle of the hard.

Trust one thing. Pick one worry you've been carrying and consciously choose to trust God with it. Every time it comes to mind this week, pray this simple prayer: "God, I'm choosing to trust You with this like a child trusts their father. I can't control this, but You can, and I believe You're good."

Be honest about your dependence. Stop pretending you have it all together. Ask for help. Tell someone you're struggling. Admit you don't have all the answers. There's freedom in acknowledging that you're a child who needs a Father.

Forgive quickly. Is there someone you need to forgive? A hurt you've been nursing? A grudge you've been holding? Choose to forgive like a child who doesn't keep score. Not because they deserve it, but because you're becoming like a child who knows what it means to be forgiven.

Praise Jesus out loud. Find one space this week where you normally hide your faith and be

just a little bit bolder. Mention what God's been teaching you. Share a verse that encouraged you. Invite someone to church for Easter. Post something genuine about your faith on social media. You don't have to be preachy or weird—just honest about who Jesus is to you.

The Question That Matters

Here's the question Palm Sunday forces us to ask: Have I become too old, too sophisticated, too educated, or too hurt to have childlike faith?

Have I traded wonder for cynicism? Trust for skepticism? Joy for analysis? Dependence for self-sufficiency? Bold praise for comfortable silence?

The religious leaders in Matthew 21 had knowledge, position, and authority. But they missed Jesus. The children had none of those things, but they saw Him clearly.

Knowledge isn't the problem. Maturity isn't the problem. Growing in understanding isn't the problem.

The problem is when we use our knowledge as a barrier instead of a bridge. When we use our sophistication as an excuse for cynicism. When we use our hurt as permission to close our hearts.

This Easter

As we move from Palm Sunday toward Easter this week, consider this: The same Jesus who rode into Jerusalem on a donkey is the same Jesus who walked out of the tomb on Sunday morning.

The same Jesus who welcomed the praise of children is the same Jesus who welcomes your praise today.

You don't have to be perfect. You don't have to have all your theology figured out. You don't have to understand every mystery or resolve every doubt.

You just have to be willing to become like a child again.

To trust when you don't understand.

To celebrate even in the chaos.

To praise even when others disapprove.

To look at Jesus and simply say, "Hosanna! You are my King, and You are worth celebrating."

The children got it right two thousand years ago in Jerusalem. Maybe it's time we learned from them.

A Prayer for Childlike Faith:

Jesus, I confess that I've made faith way too complicated. I've added conditions to my worship, footnotes to my praise, and barriers to my joy. I've become cynical where I should be wondering, skeptical where I should be trusting, silent where I should be celebrating.

Help me become like a child again. Not childish, but childlike. Give me the courage to trust You when I don't understand. The wisdom to see Your work in the middle of my chaos. The boldness to praise You even when it's awkward.

This week, as I remember Your journey from the parade to the cross to the empty tomb, help me see You through the eyes of a child. Help me wave my palm branch with joy and shout "Hosanna!" with confidence.

You are my King. You are my Savior. You are worthy of all my praise.

Hosanna, Son of David. Hosanna in the highest. Amen.

Discussion Questions:

If you're reading this with your small group, family, or friends, here are some questions to process together:

1. What stood out to you most in this Palm Sunday story when you think about it through the eyes of a child?
 2. Where have you been childish in your faith (complaining, demanding your way) versus childlike (trusting, joyful, dependent)?
 3. What "footnotes" have you added to your worship? What conditions do you place on your celebration of Jesus?
 4. In what area of chaos in your life do you need to look for where Jesus is healing or working?
 5. Where do you need more childlike confidence to openly praise Jesus, even if others disapprove?
 6. What's one practical way you can become more childlike in your faith this week?
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Share Your Story:

Have you experienced a moment where you saw Jesus more clearly through the eyes of a child—whether through an actual child in your life or by recovering childlike faith yourself? I'd love to hear about it. Share in the comments or reach out directly.

And if you found this helpful, share it with someone who might need the reminder that faith doesn't have to be complicated. Sometimes we just need to wave our palm branches and shout "Hosanna!" like those kids did two thousand years ago.

They understood something the religious experts missed: Jesus is worth celebrating, no matter what anyone else thinks.

Happy Palm Sunday. See you at Easter.