

Palm Sunday – The Great Misunderstanding

Prayer

Many times in my life I have found that common sense is not always that common. We use reasoning and cleverness so that the world does not take advantage of us. We then pat our selves on the back and move on....

Let me give you an example that many struggle with.

Let's say that a panhandler, a homeless man, a beggar or perhaps a drunk approaches you and asks for money. The first thing that goes through the mind of many is: Does this man deserve my hard earned money? Then perhaps Is this guy trying to con me? Then more altruistic thoughts come about... such as: This guy is drunk if I give him money, he will only use it to buy booze. Or I can't help him because he will buy drugs and so on.

Now we are told to be wise as serpents but harmless as doves aren't we. Shouldn't we pat ourselves on the back for asking clever questions to ferret out the truth? Shouldn't we be proud that we have not been taken in?

If you died tomorrow and the God who stated In Matt 24:40

And the King answering, will say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did it to Me.'

This is my Jesus, who willingly surrender himself to be spit upon, who willingly allowed himself to be shamed and who allowed himself to be put to death for my benefit all while knowing that I did not deserve such grace. And to do it all so that so I could be saved and participate in his joy, I must ask myself what would I say to Him?

I can't speak for others, but I can say that I would not feel very good standing before almighty Jesus who did all that for my undeserving self and saying: "Well Lord, I never got taken advantage of. I was really clever, I saw through them. I even worked out how to trick them into exposing themselves. I may have made some mistakes but I hardly had to give them anything."

My friends, I can only speak for myself, but when I stand before almighty God and give account for my actions, I personally wonder how the consummately willing, abused, crucified and exploited Jesus; who has commanded me to be good to those who despitefully use me, will react to my excuses...

When I read Matthew 5:44 & Luke 6:27-29 I do not see room for my cleverness. In fact, I see very little room for latitude in my orders from my savior Let's look at young's literal translation for this scripture:

NKJV:

But I -- I say to you, Love your enemies, bless those cursing you, do good to those hating you, and pray for those accusing you falsely, and persecuting you, that ye may be sons of your Father in the heavens, because His sun He doth cause to rise on evil and good, and He doth send rain on righteous and unrighteous.

God sends his presence and love to the righteous and the unrighteous. Are we doing things as if we are doing them unto Jesus are we loving our enemies are we praying for those who persecute us.

My question is do we as the body of Christ try to fit our ideals, cleverness into how we see God or do we read what he says and obey?

This is Palm Sunday and it is a time when Christ lays down his robes as the royal prophet and takes up the robes of kingship. What I don't want you to miss this morning is that the people had their ideas of how their king should be and so Palm Sunday represents a great misunderstanding between our savior and his people.

NLT

It Reads:

After telling this story, Jesus went on toward Jerusalem, walking ahead of his disciples. As he came to the towns of Beth phage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives, he sent two disciples ahead. "Go into that village over there," he told them. "As you enter it, you will see a young donkey tied there that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks, 'Why are you untying that colt?' just say, 'The Lord needs it.'"

So they went and found the colt, just as Jesus had said. And sure enough, as they were untying it, the owners asked them, "Why are you untying that colt?"

And the disciples simply replied, "The Lord needs it." So they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their garments over it for him to ride on.

As he rode along, the crowds spread out their garments on the road ahead of him. When he reached the place where the road started down the Mount of Olives, all of his followers began to shout and sing as they walked along, praising God for all the wonderful miracles they had seen.

*"Blessings on the King who comes in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven, and glory in highest heaven!"*

But some of the Pharisees among the crowd said, "Teacher, rebuke your followers for saying things like that!"

He replied, "If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!"

But as he came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, he began to weep. "How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes. Before long your enemies will build ramparts against your walls and encircle you and close in on you from every side. They will crush you into the ground, and your children with you. Your enemies will not leave a single stone in place, because you did not recognize it when God visited you."

The people of Jerusalem wanted a savior to free them from the Roman tyranny and oppression. They put their goal of a warrior king on Jesus. But God's plan wasn't the short-sighted plan of the Jews. His plan was to save all of mankind. Today, do we listen, read and seek to understand God and his ways or do we try to conform Jesus into our own image?

Jesus wept, because his people could not see, nor could they understand. In their wisdom they missed out on what Jesus was doing.

So here we have Jesus coming into the city of David. The wonderful thing here is that great insight was seen as we see in the scriptures Luke 19:38 tells us they were saying: *"...Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"*

Jesus is triumphant! He is their messiah come at last in fulfillment of God's promise. He is the descendant of King David, the long-awaited ruler of Israel. The people envisioned their deliverance from Rome!

So we see the human condition one again. Their insight into who he was brought them Joy, but just as with the Pharisee's and Sadducees they were unwilling to surrender their view of God. So set in their ideas were they that they missed the message their savior brought them.

Jesus wept because he saw their misunderstanding, He knew was to die in a few days and the destruction of Jerusalem would come about a mere 40 years later. Their insight brought them joy but their vision destroyed Jerusalem.

Here is the crux of the sermon this morning people. What was Jesus response?

How did Jesus respond to the blindness and hostility that he was about to endure?

Think about it... Here is Jesus and people are waving palm leaves and declaring his royal status and yet some of the Pharisees in the crowd wanted him to rebuke his disciples. He didn't meet their image of who he was either...

Jesus saw it all... he foretold it as we read in verse 43-44.

Jesus came to his own; and his own received him not... (John 1:11)

Jesus wept for their blindness and impending disaster about to befall Jerusalem. Despite what they were going to do to him and how he would be abused and put to death, he held compassion in his heart and as we see on the Cross actually asked the Father to forgive them.

These were tears of mercy and grace for a confused and lost people who although they recognized their king, failed to hear him and have missed his message of mercy.

These people who saw him as their messiah and called out his praises would be the same ones who called for his death when he didn't meet their expectations for who Jesus was as God. In simple terms, they weren't getting what they wanted and their own ambitions were in jeopardy so instead of listening and obeying the king they lauded, they crucified him.

This morning as we look at Palm Sunday and soon look to the significance of Easter and the great work of the cross, I ask us all as we look to God's word and pray. I ask this so that when we seek him and find Him, we will find Him as He promised, when we seek for Him with all our hearts. I also pray that when we see God and find him, we see him as he is. That we learn from those he has provided in his word to teach us. I pray that we actively listen to his voice and we obey him. And I pray that we willingly conform to his image and not try to conform him into our image of him and fit him into the box of our expectations of what Jesus should be like.

Finally, let me say this... As we look at Jesus' example in these scriptures we see that first he is tenderly moved, then he is self-denying and moves toward not away from need. Finally, Jesus intends to help. Mercy is seldom helpful if all it consists of is feeling. It needs action components.

Mercy to those in need requires:

- Denying self
- Multiplying Joy
- Actually Helping not enabling

So... Jesus is Lord and he has commanded us regarding others to use his approach.

John 15:12 – This is my Commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.