

"Leave the Clamor Behind"

John 12:12-19

Palm Sunday

Messiah, Boerne

March 24, 2024

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Text: John 12:12-19

Dear Friends in Christ:

Today is Palm Sunday, the day the Church celebrates the triumphal entry of our Lord Jesus Christ into Jerusalem. Pilgrims from Galilee had walked along with Jesus and His disciples to Jerusalem with high expectations of His ultimate enthronement there as the promised Son of David, the King of Israel. You hear it in their shouts of praise and see it in their adoring behavior. They covered His path with their clothes and palm branches as for a king, and they shouted praises to Him: "Hosanna," that is, "Help" or "Save," and "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel." Thus, the crowds of people, both those who had followed from Galilee and those who had come out of Jerusalem to meet Him, proclaim their belief that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. The Galileans and Judeans had heard of Jesus' miraculous deeds—some of them had even seen them—and now many were anticipating His imminent "lifting up" to rule over them on the throne of Israel.

Today is also known as "Sunday of the Passion," the day on which the Church remembers not only Jesus' triumphal entry but also His Passion, that is, His betrayal, suffering, and death later in the week. There's a great contrast between the praises of "Hosanna" on Palm Sunday and the shouts of "Crucify him" on Good Friday. What happened to the crowds for such a change to take place? Today we consider how some people are easily swayed from their beliefs as well as the importance of remaining faithful to Jesus. When we find ourselves tempted to deny the Christian faith and to sin against the Lord Christ, we need to remain faithful to Jesus and leave the clamor behind.

Some people are easily swayed from their beliefs by group pressure. Our text for today speaks of two different groups of people, one group from Galilee and the other group from Judea. The group from Galilee was made up primarily of observant Jews who were on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of the Passover. The other group was the Jewish religious leaders and their followers from Jerusalem and Judea, most of whom did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah of God. Some in the crowd that traveled with Jesus from Galilee hoped that He would ascend to the throne of David and vanquish their foes, the Roman occupiers. But since many of the pilgrims didn't have any relatives with extra room in their homes for them to stay during their pilgrimage, they camped on the hills surrounding the city.

Thus, the same people that shouted "Hosanna," that is, "Save," to Jesus on Palm Sunday were not present in Jerusalem at Jesus' trial and condemnation by the Sanhedrin on Thursday night and at the trial before Pilate early on Friday morning.

You see, according to their own law, it was illegal for the Sanhedrin to hold an assembly and condemn Jesus to death at night. Many people who could have served as witnesses on behalf of Jesus, including many among the pilgrims from Galilee, were unavailable at night. But as Jesus said, "This is the hour of darkness," both literally and figuratively. Spiritual darkness had its way as false witnesses gave false testimony concerning Jesus as a blasphemer and a Sabbath-breaker. Based on that false testimony, Jesus was condemned to die by the Sanhedrin according to the Law of Moses.

Because Judea was ruled by the Romans, however, the Sanhedrin still had to have Jesus condemned to die by crucifixion by the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. So, early in the morning, while many of those in the city and the campers on the hillsides were still resting, the Sanhedrin brought Jesus before Pilate to be tried and condemned. Pilate did not find Jesus guilty of any crime worthy of the death penalty. Neither did Herod when he had the opportunity to examine him. But once the Jewish religious authorities cried out to Pilate that he was no friend of Caesar's if he released Jesus, in other words, a

traitor, then he was persuaded to condemn him to death. Yes, the Jews condemned Jesus to die, and the Gentiles condemned and executed Him.

Friends, we must beware of people who try to sway us away from the true faith we have learned from the Bible and Luther's Small Catechism. Such people do not have your best interest at heart but are only seeking to draw you away from the God who loves you and saved you by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith. Jesus Christ is God's Son and the Savior of the world, and no one will ever love you like Him. He suffered and died for you to save you from the eternal consequences of your sins, and He rose again on Easter Sunday and ascended to the Father's right hand in heaven to prepare your eternal home. You are baptized in Christ, and no one will ever be able to take that promise of God's faithfulness away from you.

God's steadfast love for you is seen most clearly in the Passion of His Son, Jesus Christ, who set his face like flint as He journeyed toward Jerusalem for your salvation. Jesus knew who He was, the Father's beloved Son, the Chosen One of God. Nicodemus had recognized this earlier, although dimly, and had come to speak with Him at night. And Jesus knew what His mission was, to serve as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. By suffering and dying on the cross, He would pay the ransom price for the redemption of all creation. By His

suffering, death, and resurrection, He would become the source of eternal salvation for everyone who believes in Him.

Therefore, Jesus would not be swayed from His appointed goal.

Now, through faith in Jesus, you and I receive the benefits of His work of salvation. By His Passion, that is, His betrayal, suffering, and death, Jesus took our place under God's law. He fulfilled all of God's just requirements for human beings, thereby creating a righteousness available to all people. When He underwent His suffering and death upon the cross of Calvary, He took the sins of the world upon Himself as the holy Lamb of God, the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Jesus saved us not only from our sins, but also from the clamor of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature that try to distract us and rob us of the peace of sins forgiven in Christ. By believing in Jesus as the Messiah, we receive the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation God promises to you, me, and all people through His Holy Word and Sacraments.

Such saving faith then bears fruit in our lives, as we see in the lives of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus in John's Gospel account of Jesus' Passion. Joseph and Nicodemus were disciples of Jesus, although secretly for fear of losing their positions of authority among the Jewish religious leadership. Still, after Jesus' death, Joseph asked Pilate for Jesus' body, and with Nicodemus, they prepared the body for burial and laid

Him in Joseph's new tomb. Thus, we see that Jesus was reigning as King in their lives by His Spirit, as Luther writes in his explanation of the Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom come":

How does God's kingdom come?

The kingdom of God comes when he gives us his Holy Spirit so that, by his grace, we believe his holy word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity. (SC)

As we set our eyes on the goal of heaven, we, like Jesus, need to know who we are and what we believe. We are the redeemed children of God. God made us so through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, in which our sinful nature was drowned and died with all sins and evil desires, and a new person emerged and arose to live a new life of righteousness and purity before God forever. Behold, the old is gone, the new is come! We are reminded of this every Sunday when we remember our baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and when we confess our Christian faith in the Creed.

Second, you need to put your beliefs into practice by prioritizing your life, that is, by putting first things first. A person's eternal salvation is the most important thing, as Jesus said, "What good does it do if a person gains the whole world and loses his soul?" You need to prioritize church attendance and the reception of the means of grace by being baptized and baptizing your family members and receiving the

Lord's Supper "often," as Jesus says. Bible study should also be a priority in your life as a Christian, not only daily personal time with the Lord in His word, but also studying the Bible with your fellow Christians as a group. Such corporate Bible study serves as a guard against following self-chosen beliefs which can lead a person astray.

Finally, you need to fix your eyes on Jesus, as the writer to the Hebrews says, "Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of the faith, who for the joy set before him, endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." (Heb 12:1-3).

Dear Friends in Christ, voices of the world, the flesh, and the devil will continue to try to sway you from your heavenward goal. But Jesus Christ died for you and gives you new life by the Holy Spirit through God's Word, the Bible, and the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Furthermore, He strengthens that faith through your regular reception of the Lord's Supper. So, be like Nicodemus, Joseph, and the saints before you. Believe in Jesus, and leave the clamor behind. Amen.