

March 20, 2016  
John 12; Luke 23

Passion Sunday C  
Cries of the People

*Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ our Triumphant King. Amen.*

Our text comes from our both of our Gospel readings namely the words of the people: First from John 12 *The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"*

Secondly from Luke 23 *<sup>18</sup>But they all cried out together, "**Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas**"— <sup>19</sup>a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder. <sup>20</sup>Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, <sup>21</sup>but they kept shouting, "**Crucify, crucify him!**" <sup>22</sup>A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him." <sup>23</sup>But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. <sup>24</sup>So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. <sup>25</sup>He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.*

Today marks Palm Sunday...but today also marks Passion Sunday. It creates quite an issue when planning the worship service and also writing a sermon. There are four texts to choose from...actually five. You have the Palm Sunday Gospel, the Old Testament, Epistle and two options for the Passion Sunday Gospel. Do you remember back to when Palm Sunday was just Palm Sunday? I can. The pomp and the circumstance of the day. Children leading the Palm Sunday procession with actual Palm Branches. I'm glad the church has maintained the procession of the palms. Recently the church has switched Palm Sunday to Passion Sunday. Why oh why is that?

Many people jump from the victory cries of Palm Sunday to the victory shouts of Easter morning, without even stopping in the upper room, the Garden, the courtyard, the trials, the Via Dolorosa, or at the cross through the week. You'll notice Thursday and Friday, there aren't many people in the pews. Today and next Sunday...pews are fuller than usual.

There is also something else that we can see here as well. The quick turn of events with the people. On Sunday, as Jesus rides into Jerusalem people are shouting, *"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"* Just days later they shout, *"Crucify, Crucify Him! Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas!"*

Today we are going to look at the cries of the people. We are going to start with the victory parade, journey quickly to the cross and then hear from one more person who was at the cross and most likely participated at the cross.

It's the first day of the week, Jesus is riding into Jerusalem just as the prophets had foretold. The King is coming. The people that are gathered in Jerusalem for the Passover are in a celebratory mood. They are thrilled to see Jesus, the one whom has done all sorts of miraculous signs, including raising Lazarus from the dead. Little did the people know their cries almost foreshadow what is to come: "Hosanna!" means Save Us. That is exactly what Jesus is going to do for these his people. Did these people want a King who would save them from their sin or from the evil empire going on before them? Did they want a king who would save them from the hands of the Romans and go back to their joys of King David? Really, in this instance as D. A. Carson points out, "It may well have signaled nationalistic hope that a messianic liberator was arriving on the scene."

Yet days later everything changed for these people. Did they realize their King was not a king that would save them from the Romans? Perhaps. The Chief Priests, Scribes, and Pharisees did not like what Jesus was doing. He even preached against them and against their ways. We heard one of those instances last week in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants. He preached against their false teachings of the people. These are the religious leaders who know the Scriptures, they have read the Old Testament, but yet they are blind. I'm sure they knew who He was, but yet didn't see it. They didn't like the fact that He was a revolutionary, who was changing the status quo.

These Religious leaders are trying to find a way to arrest to Jesus, to bring him to trial on charges that the Romans will find him guilty of, who are the only ones who can put him to death. The Jewish Religious leaders may not like Him, but they can't put Him to death, unless, He's guilty of breaking a Roman law. They try to trip Him up all week.

They finally find a way to arrest Jesus, push Him through a rigged trial, even to the point to get Him to admit that He is the Son of God (which is blasphemy under their laws) they even rile up the crowds to get them to shout for crucifixion. Obviously the Apostles and Mary aren't shouting for crucifixion...but many in the crowd were.

How many of us would be in the crowd shouting, "Crucify Him, Crucify Him!" Think about it for a moment with me. How do you live your life? We sin. We know our sins put him on the cross, that's not something that we would find on a breaking news story. We are just as guilty as those who stood there calling for the release of a murderer, the release of Barabbas. It's disheartening to think that on a day that should be a day of celebration, a day of pomp and circumstance. After all, we did start out today with the Palm Sunday Procession and singing All Glory, Laud and Honor. We even followed in the Processional Cross.

One has to realize that Jesus did not ride into Jerusalem to be crowned an earthly King. He wasn't going to be the nationalist Messianic liberator. Jesus knew what was going to happen. He had already directed his face towards Jerusalem.

Every year during Holy Week I question...what about the crowds? Why are they so fickle? Why do they change their loyalties so much? I can ask the same questions for you and me: Why are we so fickle? Why do we change our loyalties so much? On Sunday if we make it church, we show our loyalty towards Jesus...but come Monday morning or even Sunday afternoon, where do our loyalties lie? Many times we don't live our life for him throughout the week. We are easily convinced that something else is better. For each of us it is something different. Maybe it's our job that our loyalties rest on, or our family, our education, our sports (whether it be the ones we play (hockey, basketball, etc) or the ones we watch, it is the second round of March Madness today, and Spring Training is in full gear). Your loyalties at times become your god. Our god is the one to whom we put our fear, love and trust in. Our God is the one to whom we dedicate the most of our time, talents, and treasures too. Does that mean you have to be here at the church seven days a week? NO. It means that we are to live in our vocations that God has given to us to the glory of His name and the advancement of His Kingdom. If it means changing a dirty diaper...great. If it means fixing an engine great. If it means sitting down with someone at lunch and listening to their story great. If it means having a conversation about God with your neighbor great.

We are a fickle people. Our loyalties change all the time. Loyalties to God. We would definitely be amongst the crowds. I am sure we would have joined in with the shouts of crucifixion. Why wouldn't we? Our sins put him on the cross as well.

We are a fickle people, but we do not have a fickle God. The loyalties of our God does not change. They didn't change for the people of Christ's day and they do not change for us today.

God has always been loyal to us; He has never turned His back on us. He journeyed the Via Dolorosa for us. The Road to Calvary was his gift to us. He went there for us. We've heard the many Places of the Passion and how He was always focused on the path He had, HE even prayed in the Garden: *"take this cup from me, but this is not my will, yours alone."* Jesus was in sorrow as he was going to the cross, but it needed to happen. It needed to happen as He answered the People's cry of Hosanna – Save us. In order to save us, Jesus went to the cross. He saved us from a far bigger enemy, one that was hurting us beyond everything else. He saved his people from something far bigger than the Romans, bigger than our present day enemies of Isis or other enemies that go against our God. Jesus saved us from our sin.

Our sin is what tortures us, it is what kills us. Our sin is what tortured Jesus, it is what killed Jesus. It is what caused Jesus to suffer hell on our behalf. Our sin, our fickleness led Jesus to that place of torture. Today, on this Palm Sunday, this Sunday of celebration we stop at the cross, we meditate on the crucified Lord of Glory. We meditate on the crucified King. For as Pilate cried out, "Behold, your King." We see him there, on the cross, our King...dying. A king humiliated, a king with a crown on his head, not a crown made with gold, but a crown made with thorns. We see our king suffering.

On that cross...we hear words from our King. Words that say, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." They don't know what they are doing, but yet they do. Jesus is a forgiving and loving king. What king would offer his life for his people? I know of only King Jesus. King Jesus that rules our hearts and his reign is eternal.

When King Jesus, gave up his Spirit and died, the curtain of the temple was torn in two and we had access to God, the relationship was healed. Our cries of "Crucify Him" were forgiven on the cross. Our fickleness was forgiven on the cross.

There was another voice in our gospel reading. A voice of one that participated in the act of the crucifixion. This voice is the voice of the Centurion. The voice of a man who is a Roman officer, but yet he praises God and says, "Surely, this man was innocent." In Mark's Gospel we hear him say, "Surely this Man was the Son of God."

The Son of God died on the cross and when we look at the cross on this Passion Sunday through eyes of faith, we can join with him and say, "Surely this Man is the Son of God."

As we journey through this week, we will move quickly from Palm Sunday – the cries of Hosanna to the cries of Crucify Him, but as we move through this week, let us pray that we will also hear the voice of the centurion, "Surely this man is the Son of God." "Surely this man was innocent."

Jesus the man who rode into Jerusalem, is our King. Jesus the man who walked the road to Calvary is our King. Jesus, the one who is to come again, is our King, where we will be able to say, "Behold your King." Jesus is the one that walks this road for you...not only for you but for all those that don't know Him. When you are out doing the Lord's Work this week, invite your friends, neighbors, and family members to church. Invite them to come and hear the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. Go and pick them up if you have to. Jesus is not just your King. He's the King of everyone! He came to save everyone.

In Jesus Name. Amen.

*Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Our Triumphant King. Amen.*