

Palm Sunday or Passion Sunday as it is now called is certainly one of the greatest festivals of the Christian Year. However, what does this day really signify? Is it simply a reminder that fickle human beings can shout "Hosanna" one day, and then a few days later, those same people cry, "Crucify him"?

Why did the cheering stop? The cheering stopped because Jesus began to talk more and more about a cross. In the early part of his ministry Jesus talked about the Kingdom of God. That is what they wanted to hear about, especially since they misunderstood this kingdom to be a restoration of Israel to the days of King David's glory. But increasingly Jesus began to talk about sacrifice—even giving up your life.

Palm Sunday's real purpose is to remind us of the necessity of making a **choice** ... making a decision about Jesus Christ, and Christ's claim on our lives. When Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem on that day, he made it clear that he was God's Messiah! From that moment until now, people have had to decide: **Are we for him or against him? Will we accept him or reject him?** That choice is still yours and mine, and depending on what we decide, it can be the most important turning point in our lives!

There are always people who would like to eliminate this matter of decision from Christianity. We humans normally hate to decide **"Yes" or "No."** Because our society promotes openness and neutrality, we forget it is the fundamental choices we make that shape all of life, and for that matter, the life to come. The simple fact is no one can remain neutral on the issue of Jesus Christ. We must decide for or against him. Is he God or not? Was Jesus of Nazareth a liar, or was he the word of God.

The Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, on this issue, tried as hard as anyone in history to avoid having to decide about Jesus of Nazareth. Accepting Jesus as the Son of God was absurd for this Roman but crucifying an innocent man was equally distasteful.

As individuals, we need to make a choice between **honest dealing and cheating, between life lived for God and life lived for self.** That same necessity of choice confronts us as a nation. We can no longer be neutral about the destruction of Ukraine and its people, or the issue of human rights for all citizens. These are realities that we can no more wash our hands as Pilate of old washed his hands of responsibility for Jesus of Nazareth.

Let us consider those who chose not to accept Jesus as the Christ. For many people, both then and now, Jesus is simply not the kind of Messiah they expected. The fulfilment did not live up to the promise! They wanted a king who would **justify their lifestyle, punish their enemies, vindicate their selfishness, and confirm their prejudices.** This didn't happen. Again, by comparison with most royal entrances, Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem was a shabby affair. Instead of an army, there was a following of peasants. Instead of generals, there was a handful of very ordinary

disciples. Instead of a warrior-king, there was a humble man riding on a donkey, a symbol of peace.

Jesus is still a challenge to the world. Because God's ways are not the world's ways. Love and not hatred is what God most desires. God's power and grace can save us, not human strength, and wisdom. God still weeps over the conflicts in this broken world: the conflict between rich and poor; Suffering brought to millions due to selfishness and hate. There is so much suffering in the world because the world has chosen to reject Christ and his message of peace.

But for those who chose to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord, it was a decision that transformed all of life. There was Zacchaeus who had mishandled money. There were James and John who had mishandled their desire for recognition and power. There was a woman named Mary who had sinned. There was Peter who in a moment of weakness betrayed his best friend.

What happened to change their lives? You might say in Jesus Christ, they saw themselves more clearly than ever before. In Christ, they saw the possibilities of what it means to be truly human. *In Christ, they saw the love that forgives our past, and the transforming power that makes us into new persons.* So, they made a choice -- a choice to let Jesus Christ be the Savior of their sinful lives, and the Lord of all!

Palm Sunday calls us to make a choice to receive Christ, and to let our lives be made whole again by the power of God. As you begin this Holy Week, let us say in our hearts, "**Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!**" The choice is up to you!

God Bless You.