

Blessed is He Who Comes in the Name of the Lord

Text: Luke 19:38-40 Psalm 118:25-26 Palm Wayzata 3/28/10

Mother Theresa is quoted saying, "**Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.**" Nathaniel Hawthorne said, "**Words -- so innocent and powerless as they are, as standing in a dictionary, how potent for good and evil they become in the hands of one who knows how to combine them.**" Listen to what Solomon wrote about words we use in Proverbs, "**Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.**" (Proverbs 12:18 NIV) "**The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.** (Proverbs 15:4 NIV)

The words we use reveal much about us. Our conversations can pierce like a sword or bring about healing for all who hear. We need to speak so others say that they feel "built up" after spending time with us. This morning we hear children use words to praise Jesus as the Messiah, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord..

But there were other phrases to come. Phrases like: "Away with him!" "Crucify him!" Praise comes with the shudder of suffering. Jesus would have no glory without suffering. The word "Hosanna" means "save now". That is why God sent His Son into the world. The people who said "Hosanna" then did not understand it fully. Some today don't either. Why do we need to be saved and from what? We have defense mechanisms to keep us from the prick of conscience.

One of these mental gymnastics is rationalization. Rationalization allows a person to lie, cheat, steal, or let down a friend and not feel guilty about it. Rationalization excuses the act because of mitigating circumstances. April 15, the government is so big we can ignore the rules and put what ever we want on the tax form. Just a little fudge. They wont catch us. Its our way of rebelling. There are certainly other ways we excuse our behavior.

The people with palm fronds following Jesus that first Palm Sunday are a lot like us. Jesus was a celebrity they were happy to see. Hosanna for them meant that maybe he would save them from the hated Roman legions who occupied their land and enslaved them. It wouldn't take long for the crowds to be disenchanted with Jesus. He did not make a move to start a revolt when he had all that popularity with him. The picture we get is a crowd deliriously happy proclaiming Jesus the long awaited Messianic King.

The whole city of Jerusalem must have been stirred and waiting for something terrific. All Jesus did was to cleanse the Temple of its graft, debate and denounce the religious leaders, and weep over the city because it refused to really come to him. Their mood began to change. Jesus knew there would be no glory without the cross. He had been tempted by Satan with this very thing. "All the kingdoms of the world are yours if you worship me."

Satan didn't give up on the idea either. On at least two other occasions people wanted to make Jesus a political king. Each time he avoided the crowd. The only crown he would wear is one of thorns not gold or jewels. There was no short cut to the glory of the resurrection without the suffering and death of the cross.

Like people of Jerusalem then people now like to transform God into their own image. Make Him a cartoon god whose penchant for ineptitude rivals that of Good Old Charlie Brown. Charlie tries. He's sincere. He never brings it off like he planned.

God may have created the universe but He must have made it a lemon. It just doesn't seem to work right. The perspective is observing the universe after the devastation of the fall of humans into sin. The devastation is something only God could and will make right.

Before He does anything to the physical universe he must right the spiritual universe. Each person will die because of sin, even more than that the quality of life is devastated by sin. There are eternal consequences for sin. There are also consequences here and now. Sin destroys happiness, causes pain and bitterness.

Satan wins skirmishes in our fight against evil but the war is won by Jesus. Jesus rode in accepting the accolades of the crowd and knew that in a few short days the cheers would turn to jeers and worse. They would be screaming for His death. They were angry because he did not fulfill their idea of the messiah. At the end of the week they were not silent about it either.

They wanted Jesus death by crucifixion, a hideous way to die. They let themselves be manipulated by their emotions. The chief Priests and Pharisees used those emotions because they saw Jesus as a threat to their authority. They played the emotions of the crowd like a person would play a musical instrument.

A few of us went to North heights Lutheran Church Saturday to view their musica "The Thorn". Each time I see Jesus suffering graphically depicted it hits my heart. Me Gibb's "The passion of the Christ" showed that too. So graphically that it was hard to keep watching. Mostly its because I know he took all that for me.

Why didn't Jesus just blast them with a few of his more spectacular miracles? He raised Lazarus from the dead before his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. He was always in plain sight of everyone. They saw it. They could judge for themselves. It was not his style to force people to believe. It still isn't. Jesus simply called people to follow him. When they did follow it was because of the Holy Spirit of God.

Jesus call certainly was not to greatness and glory as the world judges it. He demonstrated that by washing his disciples' feet. Jesus showed us that his cross was his glory. "I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men to me." He could see the cross as glory for his own followers. "If any man would follow me, let him take up his cross and follow me." We began our celebration today with palms. We should continue it with the great cry our lives need for Jesus to SAVE NOW! Come into my heart.

If we are to do that we need to acknowledge our sin and the need for Jesus death on the cross. The cry Save Now would also include crucify him. Our cry to save would mean much to us. We know what it took to be saved. The good news is that God is very adept at setting his universe straight. He did it in Jesus the Christ and continues to work in you and me. He brings us to confession and to seek His grace. Sing your Hosannas now but remember Good Friday AND CRUCIFY HIM. Without Jesus crucifixion the hosannas mean nothing. We can say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Amen.