

“FROM ECSTASY TO AGONY”
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April 1, 2012

Palm/Passion Sunday

Mark 11:1-10

The disciples had to have been thrilled that day. To see the crowds lining the streets, to watch the cloaks being flung down on the ground, and see the palm branches waving joyfully and with abandon - the disciples had to have been thrilled! Their Lord, their Master, was getting his due. This One who they loved, for whom they had given up their lives, their livelihoods, time with their families - was being adored by the crowds! This man who had taken them places they could never have imagined going - places of spiritual depth, of emotional highs and lows - He was being treated as He should always have been - with adoration, and praise, and respect.

It was a wonderful day. Jesus came riding into Jerusalem and all around him was joy! He saw their acts of adoration, He heard their shouts of “Hosanna!” and heard them recite scripture, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” They showed their feelings for him, and shouted their feelings about him, seemingly without abandon, without fear of who would think what about them. They simply praised him!

It was a wonderful day!

If we simply stopped here, in the lessons for this Holy Week, while we would only be touching the tip of the iceberg, but we would still learn much. And perhaps the greatest lesson would be that we too, everyday of our lives, have the opportunity to be like those people lined along the streets of Jerusalem. Everyday of our lives, we have the opportunity to, with abandon, and without fear of what people will think of us - we too, have the opportunity to praise Jesus.

Oh, of course, we won't be laying down our coats at his feet, or waving palm branches, but we can do it in so many other ways. I think too often the grind or monotony of everyday life dulls us to praise. We just live day in and day out and we take so many things for granted - and perhaps, God's love for us in Jesus Christ is one of them.

Oh, for all He has done for us, we ought to be praising Him loudly every single day of our lives. In our thoughts, in our prayers, in our actions, in the words we speak and how we speak them, we ought to be praying the Lord of our lives.

When we do, it's as if we were in the crowd on Palm Sunday - it brings Him joy, to know that we adore Him, that we're grateful to Him, that He is the source of our peace, our joy, our salvation.

What a wonderful day it was - that first Palm Sunday! How glad we are that Jesus got to experience it, got to feel all that love, and be showered with affection and respect. How glad we are that the disciples got to witness it as well. It was a wonderful, wonderful day of praise and thanksgiving, the sentiments and the actions of which we wish we have gone on forever.

But we know they didn't. Because in the blink of an eye, before the palm branches were probably even cleaned up by the street crew, everything began to change. The tide turned, the shouts of "Hosanna!" were no more, and hatred and bitterness replaced praise.

The people who were threatened by Jesus and His message rose up, and drew the crowd with them into their anger and bitterness. They didn't like the things Jesus was saying, and what He was doing, and how He was doing it. His message made people mad, and threatened the well-established power of those in charge.

Hear again now those things He talked about, the things we've listened to over the past five weeks. These are the things that made people uncomfortable, and stirred up trouble for Jesus.

Luke 12:49-53

Matthew 18:21-35

Mark 10:17-31

Matthew 5:38-48

Mark 8:31-38

It was all too much. They didn't want to hear it. So they determined that Jesus had to go. The joy of Palm Sunday now turned to the passion of the Christ - to the agony of the journey to the cross.

Cantata continues.