

OUR READING FROM THE 12TH CHAPTER OF JOHN'S GOSPEL

It's Palm Sunday and what do you see? You see the crowd, gathered in the streets of Jerusalem. They're lining the streets with palm branches in their hands, waiting for Jesus to come riding into town. And, here He comes, riding on the colt of a donkey and the crowd goes wild, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" Quite an exciting, wonderful moment, wouldn't you say?

But, is that all you see? Or, is there more? Is there more than meets the eye? Take a real good look at the crowd. They've come out to see Jesus. They have their palm branches in their hands and "hosannas" on their lips. But, Jesus isn't the only one they've come out to see. They've heard how Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. They've come out to see if this guy is really alive.

This doesn't sit so well with the chief priests and the whole Jewish Council, because when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, many of the people began to believe in Him. And the chief priests and the Jewish Council didn't like that very much.

Keep looking at the crowd, because there's more there than meets the eye. Yes, the pilgrims are there, the palm branches are there, the "hosannas" fill the air, they want to see Jesus, they want to see Lazarus, but not everyone who stands among the crowd is there to welcome the King when He comes. There are some who are there, lurking in the shadows, taking careful notes about Jesus. The reason they are doing that is because the chief priests and the Council decided they had to get rid of

Jesus. So, there are spies, if you will, looking for where Jesus is going and what He is doing to report back to the Council.

They had to be there. The chief priests and Council members are sick and tired of Jesus. He kept doing all those signs and the people are going out after Him. And they feared. They feared that if Jesus kept doing these things and the people continued following Jesus, the Romans would come in and they would lose their place, their power, they would lose everything. So, they decided the best way to stop that from happening is to stop Jesus. So, they have people looking for Him in the crowd.

Look at that crowd – it's big, ruckus, but there's more to it than meets the eye. You have people looking for Jesus; you have people looking for Lazarus, people spying on Jesus, and, of course, you have YOU – yes, you – standing among that large crowd, welcoming Jesus as He rides in. You kind of gave yourself away with the palms and the hosannas this morning.

So, why are you there? Are you just there to welcome the king, or is there more to you than meets the eye? As Christian people, we want to welcome our King, so we grab our palm branches and sing our "hosannas," but, if the truth be known, there's a little something in each and every one of us that agrees with the chief priests and the council, because we know how Jesus works.

Jesus is the King, but the problem with that is you want to be king. You want to rule and reign. You want to call the shots. You want to be in charge of all things. And, you don't like it when Jesus comes and says, "I should be the king of your life". Jesus comes to you and says, "Do not lust," and you say, "One little look ... no one will ever know." Jesus says, "Do not be angry with you brother and do not call him names," and you say "I believe in calling a spade a spade." Jesus says to you, "Do not be

anxious about tomorrow, about what you will eat or what you will wear,” and you say “Why don’t you just let me worry about that and I’ll handle it on my own.”

So, in your desire to be King, you look at Jesus as He comes and say, I don’t really want Him to come, because if He’s comes, He’s going to take over and I will lose my place and my power and all that I have, and I’m not in favor of that.

Here’s the interesting thing. The guy on the donkey knows exactly what you’re like – that you want to be king, you want to rule, and you want to reign, even over the Lord your God. And, that’s exactly why He rides into Jerusalem. Take a look at Him. What do you see? You see a guy riding a donkey. But, there’s way more to Him than meets the eyes. So much more that you sing about it this morning,

A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth,
The guilt of sinners bearing
And, laden with the sins of earth,
None else the burden sharing:
Goes patient on, grows weak and faint,
To slaughter led without complaint,
That spotless life to offer,
He bears the stripes, the wounds, the lies,
The mockery, and yet replies,
“All this I gladly suffer.”

Jesus rides into Jerusalem on that donkey bearing all of your sin. He rides in on that donkey bearing the sins of the whole world to Calvary’s cross, so He can die for all of you would be kings; so that He can rule and reign over you, for your good; so that you can live under Him in His kingdom.

That’s why He rides. And as He rides in, the plot to arrest Him all starts to come together. On Thursday night, Judas agrees to betray Him

for 30 silver coins. In Gethsemane, they seize Jesus. Oh no, there are no palm branches there, just swords and clubs. Jesus is taken off to the chief priests and council. You can almost see their faces as Jesus comes in, “Ya, we got Him now. Our problem is over. Finally, we are going to get rid of this guy.” So, on trumped up charges of blasphemy and all kinds of false testimony, they convict Him and sentence Him to death. They send Him off to Pontius Pilate. Pilate convicts Him of claiming to be a king and sentences Him to be crucified. He is taken to Calvary. There, He’s stretched out and nailed to the cross. There, He suffers and dies. Once dead, He’s buried in the tomb. But on the 3rd day, He rises again.

Take a look at the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ. And what do you see? A man of glory, still bearing the wounds and scars of His passion and death? Yes. Oh, but there is so much more to Him than meets the eye. As you look at the crucified and risen Lord Jesus, you see the entire forgiveness of all your sins. You see the resurrection of the body and eternal salvation. Jesus is that Lamb who rode uncomplaining forth for you, bearing your sins, giving His life into death for you, rising again for you on the 3rd day. And He gives all of that to you by means of Word and Sacrament -- the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. All of that is yours. And now, He rules and reigns as your King, working all things together for your good. And you live in Him in His Kingdom, where everlasting innocence, righteousness, and blessedness are yours.

Oh, there’s so much more to Him than meets the eye.

In Jesus’ Name. Amen.