

## **Palm Sunday 2018**

Jn 12:12-16; Is 50:4-7; Phil 2:6-11; Mk 14:1-15:47 (LONG)

People are pretty funny. We do all sorts of things to get people to like us. We hear today about a crowd who knew all the wonderful things Jesus did in his ministry and they cheer for him. They shout “Hosanna!” This word is both a cheer - like hurray! - and also can mean “come and deliver us.” They were impressed with what they heard about Jesus, and some were hoping that he was going to deliver them from the Romans. But as we see, things make a sharp turn for Jesus and some of those same people in that crowd cheering for him, will team up with those same Romans to kill him, and the others will remain silent. People are pretty funny.

What they had right on that first Palm Sunday was that there was a good reason to shout “Hosanna!” There was a good reason to say “hurray,” there was a good reason to expect that this Jesus was there to deliver them - because he was. Jesus didn’t teach, and do all the miracles and healings he did just so that people would like him. He didn’t start his ministry so that he would become a popular and well known guy - he did not do this for himself. He would have gone into Jerusalem that day, and to all the events that followed, whether there was a cheering crowd there or not. He came to complete a sacrifice that would deliver us from more than one political power at one time in history. He came to bring a deliverance from the sin that enslaves us. He came to free us from the grip of that sin that we sometimes do to feel good, or get other humans to like us - that sin which separates us from God and slowly takes more and more control of our resources and our life. Jesus’ actions speak out to us as clear as words: *The Lord GOD has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them.* People should be roused by Jesus and moved to conversion ... but people are funny.

What we know is that by his obedience, by his persistence, by his suffering for us in love, Jesus was looking to a bigger picture - not to his own popularity. The prophets foretell what Jesus will undergo. Despite what some looking on may think, his passion is not shameful, we hear: *I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting. The Lord GOD is my help, therefore I am not disgraced; ... I shall not be put to shame.* Following God, rather than the whims of the world or our own desires and addictions brings us to a place where we are not disgraced. But we need Jesus to do it.

Our second reading speaks of what Jesus really did. The all powerful God takes flesh as a human - but still having “the form of God” (that is, he is still God). And he empties himself - he takes on the form of one of his lesser creatures. We are funny - faced with the same choice we may say, “I wouldn’t let myself be treated like a lower creature ... do you know who I am?” Jesus doesn’t let the high and lofty reality of who he is make him stop. He doesn’t move forward for himself - or to gain anything for himself, he does not act out of pride, he is obedient to the will of the Father, and motivated out of his love for us - as a result he gains a glorification beyond anything any human can give. He gets something way better than another parade with unpredictable people waving palms. He looks beyond the human need for affection and popularity and focuses on doing God’s will. As a result we all have heaven open to us, we receive the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and Jesus is glorified. Jesus is one person who is not “funny” - this is one serious character. This is the real deal. He empties himself that he may complete his mission for us, we can imitate him by emptying ourselves of our pride and self-will in order to be filled by him and receive the glorification that his suffering won for us.