

Palm Sunday - 2020

MT 21:1-11; Is 50:4-7; Phil 2:6-11; MT 26:14—27:66

For some people, it may be hard to see how the passion of Jesus can be seen as a victory. That's because we often look at things the way the world looks at them not as God sees. We see success measured in terms of titles, we measure worth and value in terms of dollar amounts. But for God, success is measured in terms of effort and results, and value is measured by the value that God places on things. The world may laugh at this - but the world truly does not know God.

What we know is that this world's goods, honors, treasures, and pats on the back don't last. Look at Jesus today. He enters Jerusalem with lots of pats on the back, lots of honor - "Hosanna, to the Son of David!" - people laid their cloaks on the road for him to walk over, they brought the palm branches that are used to greet a conquering leader, they would have given him anything he asked for. However, in a short time he is condemned, beaten, disrespected, naked, and abandoned by most of his close friends. The world's honors and wealth and prestige are short-lived. But this passion is a victory in God's eyes, this has great value to God, why?

To understand we have to look at the results, and the fact that a thing of great value to God happens. The result of this passion is not that Jesus becomes glorified in the eyes of people - that as we saw fades away pretty quickly. The real thing that happens is that Jesus abandons what the world values and empties himself. We heard this is the second reading: *though he was in the form of God, [he] did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself.* He threw aside what the world values, he empties himself of all his self interest, any desire for prestige, and is obedient to the Father. There are two results of this: (1) the world rejects him and laughs at him, (2) he achieves through this passion and the resurrection to come, the most amazing act of all - the reconciliation of all people to God. That is the result that is great to God and us - and it doesn't matter if he looked good to the world in getting there.

Where Adam tried to be like God and led us to sin through that example, Jesus humbles himself and is glorified - a glorification that is not temporary, or fickle, or changing (like human honors), but is eternal and from God. When we follow Jesus' example - instead of Adam's - we empty ourselves - opening a space - making room for God to enter into us; when we follow Jesus' example, and not Adam's we become rich in the things of God which are eternal, not rich in the temporary things of this world. When we enter into this path we are like the suffering

servant in the first reading. *I gave my back to those who beat me, ... my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting. The Lord GOD is my help, therefore I am not disgraced; knowing that I shall not be put to shame.* Jesus fulfills this prophecy. He is humble and suffers so that he can following the plan of God. He fulfills the prophecy by speaking the words that rouse others, and by saving the people of God - leading them to the promised land. This has great value in God's eyes because the result of this humility, obedience, and trust is not a big fancy house and titles for the man Jesus, but rather his eternal glorification at the right hand of the Father, and the opening of the pathway to salvation for all the children God loves. God values each one of us, and wants us to share eternal happiness - that's why the act of Jesus opening for us the way to salvation has a great value to God.

What amazing things will God work through us when we seek not ourselves, but rather the path of emptying that allows God to enter in? At this time of fear and illness - more than other times - we should be confident that God can bring the most amazing things out of a seeming tragedy. What God can bring about in the future is more important than how bad things look in the now - Jesus's Passion, death, and resurrection show this. Those who follow the example of Jesus and empty themselves of pride, fear, selfishness, and despair - and have faith in God - will be open vessels ready to be filled with the grace of God - and then (like Jesus) they will have the chance to be part of the amazing things that God desires ... and that God will bring.