

Hosanna and Crucify!

John 12:12-19; Matthew 27:15-23

Introduction

CHRISTMAS is probably the most joyous and happy time of the Christian calendar, focusing on the **Birth of Jesus**. We **do** remember that He came to **die**, but we emphasize His birth. **GOOD FRIDAY** is the most sorrowful time, because Sunday hasn't come, and Christ is dead and in the tomb. **EASTER SUNDAY** is the most celebratory time, celebrating the **Resurrection** and the new **life** we have in Christ. The cross is a memory and it is dwarfed by the empty tomb. Today is the most **poignant** Sunday of the Year. On this day, we shout, "*Hosanna*" with the crowd welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem. Not twenty minutes later, we're shouting, "*Crucify Him*" with the crowd around Pilate's hall. We remember why Jesus suffered and died—for us.

Why the Change?

Have you ever wondered **why** the change? How could the people shout praises to Jesus, welcoming Him as the Messiah one day, then five days later demand His blood? It doesn't make sense. Here are three possible reasons for the dramatic shift.

Two Separate Crowds

We shouldn't get the idea that all the people liked Jesus and it was only the leaders who hated Him. (**Read John 6:60-69**). Jesus had been talking about being the **BREAD OF LIFE**. People must eat of Him to be saved. This was the *hard saying* and people just couldn't swallow it (no pun intended). These people would have been turned off of Jesus. When Jesus was making His triumphal entry, word got out that the man who had recently raised Lazarus from the dead was coming. Surely, this must be the **Messiah**! So, they welcomed Him as such. What was going on at Pilate's hall on Friday would have attracted the out-of-towners who were just there for the Passover and didn't know Jesus and possibly the ones who left because of His **Bread of Life** teaching. When the leaders stirred up the crowd, they joined in.

Mob Mentality

This brings us to the second reason for the shift—**mob mentality**. There is an adage that individuals may be smart, but people are stupid. People have a herding instinct. When they're in a large group, they go whichever way the group goes. This is why the media has such a powerful influence over people. They can say that so-and-so says this. And then these people back him up. They repeat it enough until more people believe it. Then the more who buy into it, the "truer" it becomes. This dynamic was at work both **Sunday** and **Friday**.

Fickleness of the Fallen

But we also know that people are **fallen** and therefore **fickle**. In **Matthew 16**, Jesus asked His disciples who they thought He was. *Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven (Matthew 16:16)*. With that, Jesus begins to tell them about His upcoming death and resurrection. When Peter protests, Jesus says, "*Get behind me, Satan! You*

are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man” (Matthew 16:23). “Hosanna” one minute and the next it’s “Crucify Him.” We can be fickle, because we’re fallen.

Our Part in This

I say “we”, because we have a part in this, too. In our worship, we shout, “**Hosanna!**” But when we sin, we shout, “**Crucify Him!**” Sometimes, we can even shout, “**Crucify Him**” in our worship. One of the things people in non-liturgical churches say about our liturgy is that it’s just words. We just recite or read the same words over and over until we’re saying them mindlessly and they don’t mean anything. The sad thing is that, if we’re not careful, that can become true. The words can become so familiar that we don’t take them seriously. So, even when we think we’re saying, “**Hosanna**”, we could be saying, “**Crucify Him**”.

Forgiveness

We can rest in the knowledge that, since we have a part in sending Jesus to the cross, the words that He said from there apply to **us** as well. When He said, “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*” (**Luke 23:34**), He was talking about us, too. Our sins sent Jesus to the cross; so, it was our sins He died for; because of His death, our sins are forgiven.

Means of Grace

We receive this forgiveness every time we partake of the body and blood of Christ at the service of the Sacrament. We receive forgiveness of sins and a strengthening of faith, so we can shout, “**Hosanna!**”

*May the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds in Jesus Christ.*
