The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed… Matthew 21:1-11 Palm Sunday

April 2, 2023 - A reflection. Pastor Phil Wold, Trinity Lutheran Church, Sheridan, Wyoming

Dear friends in Christ, grace to you and peace, from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

Don’t you love Palm Sunday? What a joy, joining with the crowd who proclaimed

"Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Hosanna in the highest!”

As we come to the end of our Lenten discipline, it is nice to begin to get warmed up for Easter, to raise our voices, and to join in the praise.

We might well wonder about the crowd. That is the word Matthew uses for those who praised him. “A very large crowd.”

Not disciples. Not citizens. Crowd.

Jesus inspired the crowd. Riding in on a donkey, Jesus is proclaiming to the people that he is fulfilling the prophecy from Zechariah. He is coming to establish God’s reign and rule in the world. . .

The crowd rejoices, and they are ready to make things happen.

And yet. Jesus is going to rule in a way that will be disappointing won’t it? Disappointing to the crowd. Perhaps disappointing to us as well.

We will hear more about the crowd in our Passion reading, at the end of today’s service. A crowd will come to arrest him. And later, when Pilate is working his politics on the crowd - - - doing what he wants, while assigning blame on everyone else, he will ask the crowd whether they want to release Jesus or Barabbus. He will act as if it is the crowd that is deciding to do away with Jesus. This man whom Pilate wants to get rid of, since it seems many believe that not Pilate, but Jesus is the important one here…

It is something to consider. This crowd who praises Jesus, and the crowd who calls for Pilate to crucify him. One question to consider is this - “Are they different crowds?” “Or are they the same people, hailing him as savior when he rides in on Sunday, and deriding him on Friday, when he stands before Pilate, seemingly powerless?”

Another question: How do Emperors and Kings and rulers deal with crowds? And how does God handle a crowd? It seems rulers seek to control a crowd. God seeks to love them, no matter the cost…

This week, we again walk with Jesus from Palm Sunday to Maundy Thursday, through Good Friday, and that long Saturday wait.

The very character of God will once again be revealed in Jesus Christ.

God is one who will be revealed in suffering love. God is one who will exercise his power, in giving his life for the world. God is one who will suffer death on your behalf, so that you might know God’s love and care.

We do well to wave our palm branches, shout our hosannas, and give thanks for the ways in which God deals with us, and sends us forth. Revealed in suffering love, God shows us how we are to respond to suffering, how we are to exercise power, how we are to live. . .

Amen