

HOLY WEEK

This is Holy Week, when we remember the events leading up to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. On what we now call Palm Sunday Jesus approached Jerusalem surrounded by crowds hailing Him as King. Just a few days later, these same crowds would be shouting, "Crucify! Crucify!"

The Apostle John tells us that very early in Jesus' ministry many were believing in Him because of the signs He was doing. But Jesus would not entrust Himself to them because He knew what was in man (John 2:23-25). He knew men's hearts are sinful and fickle.

So how was Jesus feeling about this Palm Sunday adulation? Most of us beam when we are praised for some accomplishment. Jesus accepted the crowd's praise, and in fact, when the Pharisees told Him He should rebuke his disciples for their words, He said if He did, the very stones would cry out (Luke 19:39-40). Clearly He was receiving their praise as legitimate and His rightful due.

Yet as He approached the city, He wept over it, grieved because they neither knew the things that make for peace, nor recognized their time of visitation (Luke 19:42-44). He received their praise and at the same time looked ahead to what was coming.

In the days that followed, He experienced both the crowd's hanging on His every word and the religious leaders' sharpest confrontations. He condemned the Pharisees in His most pointed parable (Luke 20:9-19), and commended a poor widow's tiny offering (Luke 21:1-4). He taught about the cosmic end times and His return, and ate the intimate Passover meal with His disciples. And finally, He experienced the agony of Gethsemane, betrayal, arrest, false accusation abandonment, mocking, beating, and ultimately crucifixion. How did He do it?

It certainly wasn't the praise of the crowd still ringing in His ears that enabled Him to endure. Peter tells us that Jesus, "while being reviled did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (I Peter 2:23). Jesus knew who was trustworthy and who was not. He never let human commendation or condemnation affect Him. He entrusted Himself to God alone.

As we seek to follow Jesus, we would do well to follow His example by entrusting ourselves to God alone. How often do we fall into the trap of taking our identity from other people or the circumstances around us? When the family is happy, and the boss likes our work, we feel worthy and in control. When squabbles escalate to major conflicts, or everything we do is a failure, we fall into despair and hopelessness.

Jesus calls us to follow His example. The people and circumstances in our lives will not toss us about or define who we are if we look to God alone for truth.