

Notes on Short reflection on Palm Sunday

We have just listened to the last days of Jesus' life on earth.

There are very different ways to look at, to interpret Jesus' last days in Jerusalem, at his passion and at his violent death.

There are Three VERY different takes on the experience on what is happening:

(Stand to one side of the sanctuary)

First take: The political leaders of the country.

Rome which has conquered and now controls the country of Israel, wants no opposition to Caesar. They will crush opposition at all costs. One of the best and most cruel ways is by crucifixion so that these Jews can see their "prophets", these troublemakers publically killed. Jesus is simply one of the many self- styled leaders who needs to be done away with. His trial and death clears the board of another disturbing revolutionary.

(Move to the second side of the sanctuary)

Second take: The religious leaders of the Jews

The religious leaders are just about the only ones who have any power to speak for the Jewish people. Now this Jesus comes along who challenges their wisdom, calls them hypocrites and accuses them of being blind fools and whited sepulchres. His words are rousing the people against their leadership. He must be stopped. He must be done away with.

(Move to the center of the sanctuary)

But Jesus frames his own death and resurrection in a very different way. And he uses two actions of Palm Sunday to give us his take on what is to unfold.

(Go down the main aisle and begin walking forward.)

First, he tells his disciples exactly what to do. He is in total control of his destiny. They are to go into the city and get a donkey and prepare for the Passover meal. When they follow his instructions, things work out exactly as he says. It is not the Roman civil authorities who are controlling what is happening; it is not the Jewish religious leaders who are framing his destiny. It is Jesus, fully aware that he has come from the Father and that he is going to the Father and that the Father has placed all things in his hands who enters into the events of his last days on earth.

Second, Jesus enters the City of Jerusalem, the political and religious center of the Israel, not with regal authority and power, but on the humble back of a donkey but with the praise of the people. Have you ever seen the movie, Ben Hur. Royal official would enter the city on gilded chariots powered by Arabian horses. But not Jesus. He is a humble leader come to serve his disciples by washing his feet. He does not wear the robes of the priesthood, but the simple robe weaved by a woman of humble means. His kingdom, his priesthood, his way of living overwhelms us, not with a show of power but with the embrace of attentive love.

(PAUSE)

Well, here we are as we begin this Holy Week. The world we live in will not react with the active troubled concern of the Roman authorities of Jesus days or the fear of the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' time.

No, our world will have different takes on Holy Week. Most in our secular society will treat the events of this Holy Week with benign neglect. We may hear about an Easter egg hunt in our community or see an Easter clothes sale, but for most people around us, this week will pass with uneventfully.

What about you, Christian. How will you spend this week? Turn to your neighbor and say, "Neighbor, how will you spend this week?".

Yes, how will you spend this week? Will you just let it slip away like sand through your fingers? Or will you let Jesus use this week and once again reveal to you

- Jesus' profound love for us;**
- his total faithfulness to the Father,**
- and, even in the midst of our suffering and pain and the surety of death, the way to eternal life?**

Jesus began this week by humbly entering into the City of Jerusalem to suffer die and rise. Jesus leads us into deep prayer and reflection this we; let us follow.