

Palm Sunday 2021 – Do you want to see Jesus, don't miss Him!

1. I was musing over something that probably isn't in the forefront of your mind when you consider the Bible or more specifically the Gospels
 - a. Did you know that beginning with the Triumphal Entry/Palm Sunday the account of the last week of Jesus' life comprises roughly one quarter of Matthew and Luke, a third of Mark, and nearly half of John?
 - i. That's a significant amount of space dedicated to the final week of our Lord's life and ministry.
 - ii. And as you might have guessed, all of the Gospel writers detail this event in Jesus' ministry (they don't otherwise always record the same events in His ministry)
 - b. Often when we cover Palm Sunday, we draw the contrast between the cheering crowds acclaiming their King on Sunday with the jeering crowds of Good Friday seeking His death
 - i. The take home message is that we have a fickle sinful nature that changes so easily, whereas our Lord remains steadfast and resolute for us.
 - ii. But today in our Gospel from John we see a group of Greeks, we assume Jews who lived away from Jerusalem and spoke Greek not Hebrew, coming to the city for Passover
 - iii. And they find Philip and say to him, "**Sir we want to see Jesus.**" (Jn 12:21)
 - c. Our first inclination might be to put ourselves in Philip's spot and wonder what would we say or do if asked.
 - i. But what if we place ourselves in the position of the Greeks.
 - ii. The people gathered on that first Palm Sunday in Jerusalem thought they wanted to see Jesus too, but they missed Him.
 - iii. Do you want to see Jesus...don't miss Him!
 - iv. He has already revealed Himself fully for those with eyes of faith but He's not the kind of Messiah that human eyes can see, or sinful minds can comprehend.
2. Have you ever waited expectantly for something for so long that you almost grow tired of looking and before you know it you missed it?
 - a. Of course, as kids we always wanted to wait up to either see or hear Santa Claus on Christmas Eve only to find out that you fell asleep and missed him again!
 - i. One of the main themes in the Gospel of John is witness – the believability of the testimony because the one giving the testimony is a witness to the truth
 - ii. As John writes about himself at the conclusion of his Gospel, "**This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.**" (Joh 21:24)

- iii. But we know that the testimony of people like John often fell on deaf ears in first century Israel.
 - iv. The irony in John's Gospel is that the people who should have rejoiced that the promised Messiah had finally come...missed Him
 - b. John writes about this in one of the saddest verses of Scripture at the beginning of his Gospel setting up the tension that is finally played out on Good Friday, "**He came to his own, and his own did not receive him.**" (Joh 1:11)
 - i. John was probably talking about the Jewish nation and their rejection of Jesus, but it could just as well describe humanity.
 - ii. As John made clear in his Gospel, everything came to being through Jesus, including humanity (Jn 1:1-3)
 - iii. Israel's rejection of Jesus mirrors humanity's rejection of Jesus
 - c. So, when the Greeks come to Philip to ask him to see Jesus this consistent with the theme of John that those who see Jesus come to follow Him
 - i. We are introduced to Philip in the first chapter of John whom Jesus calls to follow him and he immediately finds his friend Nathanael and tells him, "**We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.**" (Jn 1:45)
 - ii. And he hears Nathanael's skeptical reply, "**Can anything good come out of Nazareth?**" To which he offers the invitation, "**Come and see.**" (Jn 1:46)
 - iii. Philip was one who pointed people to Jesus, to come and see, to experience Jesus for themselves.
 - iv. We know that Nathanael comes to faith after his exchange with Jesus saying, "**Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!**" (Jn 1:49)
 - d. We don't know that about the Greeks who are referred to in today's Gospel
- 3. Israel was looking for a different Messiah, a different Savior, and they missed Him
 - a. In our Lord's day the people were chafing under Roman rule, they were looking for a Messiah like David who would restore the Kingdom of Israel.
 - i. Instead, the Son of David told Pilate, "**My Kingdom is not of this world.**" (Jn 18:36)
 - ii. And as we heard last week, "**whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**" (Mar 10:43-45)
 - b. Do you want to see Jesus, too...don't miss Him!
 - i. As I mentioned a few moments ago, He has already revealed Himself fully but, like Israel, we are often looking for a different Messiah

- ii. Many movements today co-opt Jesus, or a figment of the real Jesus, to legitimize their goals.
 - iii. If you want social justice, Jesus is the ultimate social warrior, breaking down barriers of class and race – just look at who He hung out with, the marginalized, outcast, poor, He was the ultimate social justice warrior.
 - iv. The same could be said for any sexual sin that people seek to justify, Jesus came in the name of love and since God is love then we can use Jesus to justify any aberrant relationship even though it's clearly condemned in the Bible
- c. I think I used this example before, but I'll use it again because it fits, our society has come to see Jesus in the words of the 1989 Depeche Mode song, **"Your own personal Jesus"**
- i. In our sinful hearts and minds we make Jesus the Messiah who delivers everything we want.
 - ii. But Jesus didn't come to rubber stamp our cravings, to fit the mold that we want Him to fit, He came to be the Messiah we need not the Messiah of what we desire.
 - iii. The Messiah we needed was not the One who would deliver social justice, gender equality, racial equity or whatever 21st century buzzword concept you can think of
 - iv. But we needed the Messiah who would deliver us out of the power of sin and hell, who would crush our enemy Satan under His feet, by dying on the cross.
- d. As Paul tells us in Col, **"God made [us] alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him."** (Col 2:13-15)
- i. The cross was an instrument of grace and salvation for us, and it was simultaneously the instrument of war by which our Messiah vanquished His enemy.
 - ii. Our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem began His march to the cross where He would hand us His victory over sin and death through faith
 - iii. Do you want to see Jesus, here He is on His way to the cross for your sin, don't miss Him while you're looking for another Messiah.