

Despised and Rejected

Preached: 3/28/2021; 6th Sunday in Lent, Palm Sunday; Germantown;

Scripture

Luke 19:28 – 44

Message

Sunday, March 28 is Palm Sunday. It is the day we remember the event that I read about in the Children's story and in the passage of Scripture that I just read – Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week. On Thursday of this week we will remember Jesus' last Passover gathering with his disciples. At that supper, he institutes the ordinance of Footwashing. He takes on the role of the servant, goes around the table and washes the feet of the 12 apostles who had gathered with him. And then he institutes what we know as the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper. He takes bread and breaks it, and gives it to his disciples, saying "This Bread is my body, given for you." And then he takes the cup and passes it around to his disciples saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for many." The bread and the cup represent the giving of Himself on the cross as a sacrifice for sins. Friday of this week is sometimes called Good Friday, the day we remember His death on the cross for our sins. And then next Sunday is Easter Sunday, the day we celebrate His resurrection from the dead.

As our attention is drawn even more closely to the cross, we think about the extent of Jesus' suffering for us. We read about the physical suffering that Jesus had to endure – from the moment he was arrested in the garden, he was beaten and flogged and finally nailed to the cross. Crucifixion is one of the more painful means of execution. And we are aware of the spiritual agony that he suffered. On the cross when he became sin for us, he cried out, "**My God, My God, why have you forsaken me.**" In that moment he experienced the agonizing separation from His Father. The separation that all who are guilty of sin deserve. We cannot now imagine the pain of that alienation from God.

There is another form of suffering that Jesus endured. It is the suffering of rejection. The prophet Isaiah writes about the Suffering of the Servant of God in chapter 53. It is a clear reference to the suffering that the Messiah (Jesus) will have to endure. Here are some of his words:

***he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
and no beauty that we should desire him.***

***³ He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.***

As we read this passage about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem it does not appear at first that Jesus is experiencing rejection. The mob of Jesus' disciples are shouting and cheering. "**Hosanna!!! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!**" But Jesus knows what is ahead. In Luke's version of this story, he tells us something that the other Gospel writers do not tell us. As Jesus arrives at a spot where he is able to look out over the city, he begins to weep. He is not shedding tears of joy because of the reception he is getting from his followers. These are tears of grief. His words of lament let us know that he is heart broken for the city of Jerusalem. He is heartbroken as Isaiah's words are about to be fulfilled – Despised and Rejected. He knows that He alone can restore and reconciled people who have turned from God. And yet in their stubbornness they turn on him.

- **Rejection by the Pharisees – the religious leaders of God's people, who should have recognized who He was and what He offered to the people. There will be more of that rejection as the week goes on.**
- **He will be rejected by the people. Even though on this day, many are welcoming him, another crowd will cry out for his crucifixion in a few days**
- **He will even experience rejection from some of his closest friends and followers;**
 - **After His arrest, we read that all of his disciples fled**
 - **Peter the one who said he was the most loyal will deny ever knowing him. (Jesus looks at him)**

- **And then there is Judas – who will be the one who turns him over to his enemies**

Many people have experienced the heart break of rejection. Perhaps you have known disappointment caused by others. Jesus knows what you are feeling.

As we learn about the rejection of Jesus, perhaps none is more troubling than that of Judas. Judas had been a follower of Jesus for 3 years. He would have been sent on preaching and healing missions by Jesus. He gained the trust of Jesus and the rest of the 12 as he was designated to be the keeper of funds that were given to support their ministry. And yet we read this in Luke 22:

22 Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover. ² And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people.

³ Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. ⁴ He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. ⁵ And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. ⁶ So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd.

Judas has clearly turned on Jesus – despised and rejected. What went wrong? The gospel writer John tells us that shortly before this Jesus and the 12 were at a supper together with Mary, Martha and Lazarus. While they were there, Mary came in and broke a jar of very expensive perfume over Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. The disciples protested this act of devotion. John tells us that Judas raises the question: **Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor?** But then John adds this little caveat – Judas did not say this because he cared about the poor, but because as the keeper of the funds, he used to help himself to the money. Jesus rebukes the disciples – including Judas – for their protest. So Judas was **losing income**. And now he is being **publicly rebuked** by Jesus – a “dressing down! That had to hurt. That incident may give us a clue about what led Judas to turn on Jesus and how Judas gave Satan an opening into his soul – so much so that Satan was able to use him to bring about the arrest of Jesus which led to his crucifixion. Judas was a deceiver. He had secrets, secret sins. His greed had turned his heart from the Lord.

What was Jesus' response to Judas. Jesus knows his heart, that he will betray Jesus, but Jesus is not ready to give up. When they are gathered in the Upper room, as Jesus is washing the feet of his disciples, showing them the extent of his love for them, he washes Judas' feet. When Judas comes to betray him in the garden later that same night, he challenges Judas again. Calls him friend. Questions the sincerity of the kiss, offering Judas another opportunity to turn from his act of betrayal. But Judas does not respond. He does not turn from his wickedness. Even after Judas recognizes the error of his act, he feels remorse, but he does not repent. I am sure that Jesus would have forgiven him, but he will not give in.

So we are warned by the actions of Judas. Are there lessons for us to learn from what Jesus experienced? Don't be a Judas.

- **Don't allow secret sins to turn your heart from Jesus.** Secret sins can create openings for the power of Satan to take control of our mind.
- **Jesus' arms are open to the penitent heart.** If we become aware that our heart has grown cold or our devotion to Jesus has begun to wane, turn back to him.
- **Be prepared to demonstrated grace when you experience rejection and disappointment from others.**
- **Be patient in your times of disappointment and rejection. Often times we will discover that what others intend for harm God is able to use for good to accomplish His purposes.**

God uses Judas' act of betrayal as a part of His plan of salvation on the cross. As you remember Jesus this week, I hope that you will feel drawn to him as you understand the depth of His love for you.