

“The CROSS, or a CROWN”
Palm Sunday, April 14, 2019
Oak Grove Mennonite Church

Luke 19:32-38

On that day when Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, with people cheering him on, giving him a 'Kingly' welcome, with quotes from Ps. 118, referring to the coming Messiah, Jesus wanted to let them know that He was a king, but NOT the kind they were expecting!

--They expected a military/political hero to rise up to deliver them from Roman rule. They could only understand Jesus in terms of earthly power and dominance. But Jesus tried to make it clear to them that He was about changing their hearts, not the power structures of the day. They tried to use Jesus for their own comfort/revenge/control, to solve their problems, and make life easier for themselves!

--In this passage, v. 45, Jesus lamented that they did not recognize the time/manner of God's coming! It was clear that Jesus chose the difficult and painful road of suffering and death, over wearing a crown!

But do we not also make a big mistake in using Jesus to make life easier for ourselves? We still do not want to choose the way of the cross, and we thereby miss God's best for us, and blessing on us!

--It is in following Jesus to the cross, that we will find our true identity with God!

Matthew 20:20-28

The mother of James and John came to Jesus, asking that her two sons be given places of honor on each side of Jesus, when He eventually became king! (The other disciples were not thrilled with this request!) She also could only see Jesus in terms of earthly, political power and control. But Jesus quickly tried to tell her that he was really about something totally different.

--She, along with many others, think of importance in terms of external prestige/power/influence, trying to use Jesus to inflate our ego, give us a sense of importance, draw attention to ourselves, or think that life is all about our own success, not caring about the welfare of others!

--But Jesus made it clear that He was all about SACRIFICE (the cross), and SERVING OTHERS, not for others to serve Him! (v.28)

--Jesus also said that His followers were to follow His example, in choosing the way of sacrifice of self, (just the opposite of human nature which wants to exalt self), and to give our lives in serving others, not seeking the human power of domination and control over others.

--When I was young, I longed to be a pastor because it seemed to me to be a means of being respected, and given a position of honor! I had a very low esteem of who I was, and needed external validation! Maybe others of us also use Christ, even in church positions, for our own power/control needs?

Galatians 2:20

“I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life that I live in the body, I live by faith in the son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

Jesus calls us to the way of the cross, to die to our own selfish wishes, and desire to dominate and control others. The way of the cross is painful humiliation, loss of self, sacrifice of all power and control over others, and eventually death. But we need to experience a death to self before we can find the new life in Christ! We all know, the story does not end with the cross!!

--Is it our own selfish need to control others, that needs to be nailed to the cross? Have we too often chosen the way of dominance over others, seeking to exalt our own ego by being honored and served by others, even our Christian brothers and sisters, rather than being willing to follow Christ in sacrificing our lives in service to others?

--The cross is “winning by surrender, live by dying, gain by losing, triumph by defeat!”

IT IS FOR OUR SIN OF SELF-CENTEREDNESS THAT CHRIST WAS NAILED TO THE CROSS