

Why did the cheering stop? (1st slide up while I'm walking up)

CHEERING FOR JESUS

On the day which we today celebrate as Palm Sunday, Jesus approached Jerusalem.

As He rode into Jerusalem, the crowds waved palm branches, a symbol of Jewish nationalism. They shouted, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" They cheered, they praised and exalted Him.

Have you ever thought what a great time it would have been, and how enjoyable it would have been to be part of the crowd? As a young child I remember how exciting it was when Princess Alexandra came to Toowoomba, and we all lined up on the edge of the road to cheer and wave. Being a pretty short kid, I remember trying to jostle for a place at the front so I could see. We kids really got into it – shouting at the tops of our voices and waving little flags.

Cheering Jesus would have been even better - with palm branches waving, and coats laid on the ground in front of Him. Kids and grownups shouting together for Jesus. # Some shouted **Hosanna** – which means "**Save us o Lord**"

Some shouted "**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!**"

Some shouted, "**The Lord is God!**" And they waved those palm branches.

They had seen Jesus' mighty works. They witnessed Him restoring sight to the blind. They saw Him healing the lame. They saw Him feed the multitude with a little boy's lunch. They saw Lazarus raised from the dead. They listened to Him teach with authority. Surely Jesus was the one who would set them free from the Roman conquerors. So, when He came to Jerusalem, the crowds began to cheer.

But Jesus knew the hearts of the people. The Jews wanted a king, a conqueror, someone to set them free. They had the wrong idea about Jesus – they thought he was going to set them free from their earthly conquerors. They cheered for what they **thought** He was.

We know who He is – are we cheering for Him today as we think about this?

In half an hour the other day I thought of lots of the things I know Jesus is.

And of course there are more!

He's **love**.

He loves you as though you were His only child. He **knows everything**. He knows you better than you know yourself. He is **wise**. He knows what is needed in every situation. He is **powerful** – He can move mountains. He's **merciful** – He doesn't give us what we deserve. He's **gracious** – He gives us what we don't deserve! And there's more! Let's look at some more of the names and descriptions of Jesus.

Jesus told His disciples,

^{JN 14:6} "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

JN 14:8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

JN 14:9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?' # 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. 11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves."

Jesus' whole life showed that He was God – one with the Father. But the disciples couldn't see it.

Jesus revealed Himself as the one who is worthy of our praise and worship. He said to a Samaritan woman,

22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. # 23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

JN 4:25 The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

JN 4:26 Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

Later Paul told the people at Athens, AC 17:22: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you." And He preached to them about Jesus.

Here in church, and outside in our everyday lives, we worship Jesus – we know who he is. ***For us, the cheering should never stop.***

Why did the cheering stop?

Back to the story. Before too long, the cheering stopped. The Jews were under heavy Roman oppression. There were heavy taxes, restrictions, executions by means of crucifixion, and Jesus knew all about those things.

But He didn't gather any troops. He didn't lead a revolt. He didn't do what they expected. Instead, He drove moneychangers out of the temple. He paid taxes to Caesar. He taught that giving out of poverty is worth more than giving out of abundance. He taught that in order to be great, you must be a servant. He predicted the downfall of Jerusalem. Jesus said and did things the people didn't want, and so the cheering stopped.

When things go our way, when God does what we want, when Jesus rises to our cause, it's easy to cheer. But what about when He doesn't do these things? What happens when you face oppression? What happens when you experience troubles? What happens when there is too much rain – or too little? What happens when our personal lives go pear shaped? Too often, our cheering comes to a stop. Words of adoration and praise quickly fade when you face life as it really is.

Sometimes God does give us what we want, but He **always** gives us what we need. But often we have a problem. Our wants and our desires blur our ability to see our real needs. The same thing happened to the crowds that lined the streets to cheer Jesus. There were some things that *they* didn't see, but Jesus did.

Look at verses 41-42.

LK 19:41 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it ⁴² and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace - but now it is hidden from your eyes." # ⁴³ The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴ They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

Why did the cheering stop? Why did Jesus weep for the people of Jerusalem?

These people did not recognize Jesus' purpose, and so Jesus wept over them because he knew what was going to happen.

Look at the end of verse 44, "because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you." There's some irony here, isn't there? Here is a group of people really wanting relief and salvation from oppression, and failing to see their opportunity for true relief – failing to see that God himself was among them!

These people were looking for the kingdom of God. Jesus had already told them that the kingdom was already in their presence, Luke 17:20-21. They were aware of His claims to be the Son of God. They had seen His miracle working power. But there is a reason that they could not see His purpose.

They could not see Jesus' purpose because they had their eyes on their immediate **circumstances** instead of their current **condition**.

We are the same way today. When you experience trials or certain hardships and difficulties, and you fix your eyes on your circumstances; when your focus is on everything around you that is wrong, then something happens. Your prayer becomes, "Lord, deliver me, help me, fight for me, uplift me."

Perhaps the prayer **should** be, "Lord, mould me, use me, grow me through these things, change me, and get glory for yourself." Too often we want God to change the circumstances, instead of asking God to change **us in** those circumstances.

And when we focus on our circumstances, our cheering stops. We lose sight of Him and His purpose, and we stop worshipping Him in Spirit and in Truth. We go through the motions of service and think only of what He can do for us, instead of praising Him for who **He is**.

The people desired deliverance from political **oppression**. Jesus came to deliver them from the **bigger problem of sin**. In their desire to escape their immediate circumstances and to have their brand of peace, they missed the fact that they were walking in the very presence of the Prince of

Peace. Don't let that be what causes *your* cheering for Him to stop. Don't lose sight of the fact that through any circumstance, you are always in the presence of the Prince of Peace.

John 16: 33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." It's impossible to get peace from the world when all around us is trouble and hardship. When there are voices and pressures pulling us in all different direction. But Jesus wants to give us peace, even in the middle of trouble.

The people around Jesus not only refused to recognize His purpose, # but **they also refused to accept His terms.**

Jesus' terms were clearly spelled out. # In Matthew 16:24 you see that they involved a cross, "Take up your cross and follow me." The terms involved careful *consideration*, "Count the cost." The terms involved *submission*. In old times, two kings prepared for battle, the weaker would send an ambassador to request the terms of peace from the stronger army. It was then up to the weaker king to submit to those terms if he desired peace.

The people in Jerusalem desired peace but wanted it to come through a change in their circumstances. Jesus was offering them peace *in* the midst of conflict. And Jesus said of Jerusalem in Luke 13:34, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! # How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!" And the city of Jerusalem, whose name means city of peace, refused Jesus' terms. Why? It was because they wanted to set the terms of peace.

How often do we as Christians do the same thing? We want peace, and we want blessings, but at the same time, we want to do things our way in order to get them. We're saying, "God, I want peace and blessings, and I'm going to do this, that, and the other, because that's how I want to handle it. And Lord, your job is just to bless me in my actions. "

There are many who even want to set the terms for going to heaven themselves. "Oh, I'm going to get to Heaven one day, but I'll get there on my own terms. I'm a pretty good person. I don't think God will turn me away."

Jesus was clear when # He said, 'I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me.' There is only one way to come to God. There is only one way to get to heaven. That's not just my narrow opinion. That's what Jesus Himself said.

Are you refusing His terms? There is a way that seems right to a person, but the end of it is destruction. Why? Because He has told us the way and people refuse to accept His terms. Jesus is the only way; the provision for salvation has already been made. The blood that was shed on the cross of Calvary is the only way our sin can be forgiven, and we can be made right with God.

The Jews did not recognize His purpose. They refused to accept His terms, and,

they did not realize that this would bring judgment.

Notice in verses 42-44, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ The days will come upon you when your enemies

will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. # 44
They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

Jesus describes the future judgment of Jerusalem in this passage. They had been warned, they knew the terms, they had heard Jesus tell them who He was, but they refused to accept these things, and judgment came.

In 70A.D, a Roman general named Titus, set siege against Jerusalem because they did finally revolt. The people did it their way. They acted according to their own purpose, they acted upon their own terms, and judgment and disaster followed. According to the historian, Josephus, over one million Jews were killed. The temple was destroyed.

Things happened just as Jesus said they would. They knew His claim, they knew His terms, they refused to accept them, but there came a point when they had no more opportunity to accept them. They wanted things their way, and so the cheering stopped completely with one silencing blow...judgment.

How does that apply to us? ## You cannot approach God on your own terms; you must come through Jesus. # You cannot even come to Him in your own time. No one comes to Him unless the Father draws them. # When you come to Him you must accept His claims; Jesus is the Son of God, the sacrifice for sin, the Lord and Saviour. If you refuse these things, one day there will be ultimate judgment. All that will be left for you if you don't choose to accept and follow Jesus is destruction in a place called Hell - a place of eternal judgment. # There is a "too late" in dealing with God.

Let's be the people who never stop cheering for Jesus. For those He has prepared a place. For those He has promised strength and comfort for our life on this earth. Hosanna. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

Christian friend. Maybe your desires have been self-centred instead of God-centred. You are saved, but perhaps you have never accepted His terms of service, and you have been doing things on your own, and in your own strength. Shouldn't you accept what He wants you to do, and follow Him regardless of cost?

Maybe some of you have never accepted Christ as your Saviour – you've never taken the first step towards finding God's purpose for your life.

If you want to accept God's purposes for your life, if you want to make Jesus the Lord of your life, do it today.

SONG: It was on the cross

COMMUNION

As Jesus turned from the fickle cheering crowd, he wept for those who would be lost. And He continued on in His journey towards the cross.

We're coming to the time of communion, when we remember what Jesus has done for us on the cross.

Before we share the bread and the cup together, spend a moment thinking about You and Jesus. Is your life spent cheering for Him – are you worshipping Him every day as you serve Him every day. He sacrificed Himself on the cross for you. Have you given up anything for Him? Have you given up your right to do what you like without reference to Him? Have you given up your right to love something or someone more than you love Him?

Spend time thinking of His sacrifice. Ask yourself, "what do I give Him every day?"

He died for you. Are you dying daily to yourself so that you can live for Him?

Minutes of reflection

This bread symbolises Jesus' body, broken for us. Let's give Him thanks.

PRAYER

Our cups of juice or water symbolise His blood that was poured out on the cross for us. Take a moment to thank Him as we all drink together.

SONG: "It was on the cross" or

O the wonderful cross

Prayer