

Mixed Emotions

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Scripture: Luke 19:33-40

³³As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” ³⁴They said, “The Lord needs it.” ³⁵Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. ³⁷As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, ³⁸saying,

“Blessed is the king
who comes in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven,
and glory in the highest heaven!”

³⁹Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” ⁴⁰He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”

With all that has been going on in our state, country, and entire world, it is easy to forget that we're in our last week of Lent. In fact, I'm almost tempted to say some, who cares? During these times, we must care when it's tempting to say it may not or does not seem to matter.

When you do wonder why it's worth doing certain things, of course there may be some things you discover aren't as important as they used to be, but do not let discouragement, fear, anxiety, stress, and all the other natural feelings that we need to journey through totally dominate your mind, body, and spirit. Do not try to handle it all by yourself. Yes, definitely pray, talk with others, and do all the things that you can in order to remember not only the meaning of what you do, but that you are do it all and living for the love of God and others.

In today's Palm Sunday Scripture reading, we find it strange that while crowds were celebrating Jesus Christ arrival as he rode on a colt, rather than a horse like royalty or a king would, they went bonkers because they were seeing, at least from their perspective, that Jesus saying to everyone that he was ready to be the promised king that would help them be victorious against all occupiers and oppressors, mainly the Roman Empire. And though Jesus allowed it, since it was prophesied, Jesus wasn't celebrating like everyone else.

But how crazy that while everyone was celebrating and going wild with excitement and hope of being liberated by a true leader who not only performed miracles and even raised the dead, but he was one who truly cared and loved them, all of them, regardless of background, status, or a life that was with little sin or a life full of sin. He loved and forgave them.

So they shouted joyfully and wildly what they had learned from Scriptures that prophesied the Messiah's arrival by saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Of course, there are always naysayers and party-poopers. We all have had people in our lives who want to make your celebrations or other's joy less significant by either not celebrating, which is not as bad as saying something like it's not a big deal or worse how they did something better, or more significant doing something to put down or to take away from your celebratory moment.

Many emotions were involved in Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem. Obviously the disciples who were waiting for Jesus to rise up and be the king they knew him to be, as well as the crowds that were exploding with celebration by shouting, throwing their cloaks on the ground and grabbing anything they could to throw on the path to show their honor, respect and expression for love for true royalty, including taking palm branches and leaves.

Then there were some of the Pharisees who did not believe in Jesus or didn't not like who Jesus may be or become, and who were afraid what this meant for them, which was the possibility of more conflict with the Roman Empire who would surely punish them if a king were rising among them. And of course they were afraid of losing their religious power over the people. Of course, Jesus knew what would happen that week which included allowing himself to be arrested, beaten, mocked, spat upon, flogged, then crucified, and then in hell for 3 days. He did know he would rise again. But knowing that did not all of a sudden make everything okay.

Sometimes it's tempting and easy to say to someone who is going through a terribly time, in trying to make them feel better rather than sitting with them as needed, how things will be all better in time, or look at how other people have it worse, or that it's all God's plan, which you could say everything is God's plan if you truly wanted to. Yet, when someone is down, grieving, or crying over something difficult, like the loss of a loved one, and you know they know about Jesus and the resurrection and new life, it's not the best thing to say at that very moment, something like it'll all be okay, it'll all workout, and s/he is in a better place so everything is fine.

Of course, people hurting may actually say those things to help others not feel so sad around them, or to try and tell themselves they shouldn't grieve, have a hard time, or feel so sad. However, we must be okay with the mixed emotions we sometimes have, others have, and we all have. We know Jesus surely did! In fact, Jesus was not shy about showing all the emotions he had, from grief, concern, joy, anger, disappointment, frustrations, pride, surprise, and more.

Well, during these days, weeks, months, and in the days to come after this pandemic is over, no doubt there will be mixed emotions about almost anything and everything going on now and that will happen. From feeling like we're spending too much time by ourselves with to way too much time with others we're confined with, though there will be moments it's great and other moments when it most challenging.

You may feel like it's great to stay up or sleep in some days, and then feel uneasy about waking up so late you're jumping right to lunch. Yet, these are certainly unusual times when the strain on us is more than mental and physical, which they are, but also spiritual. And when we are also worn spiritually, which most do not understand can make the difference between weathering the storms of life well or not, it affects us and our all the emotions we have.

For me, I also have mixed emotions. I have come to understand they are perfectly fine, from having so much appreciation and thankfulness as well as concern, worry, fear and other feelings when I think of my friends and all in the healthcare system, as well as all those who make it possible for us to live and have what we need...from the farmers, truckers, pharmacists, sanitation workers, gas station workers, restaurant workers, and all who sometimes take for granted.

Even at times when we are not fully aware or able to comprehend what is going on, when we are confused by what is happening, and don't know what to do or what can be done, we will have all sorts of emotions that are conflicted with others as well as even within ourselves.

As on Palm Sunday there were mixed emotions, misunderstandings, joys, sadness, hopes and fears, and more all mixed up, so here we are today with feeling and seeing more of what Christ did and continues to see in the world, back then as well as today.

What helps so much is seeing that Christ is the one who helps us when it seems like no one can. When everyone is doing their best and things we know will get better in time, though possibly worse for a while before getting better, we can always rely on Christ when we feel all emotionally mixed up.

Sure there are some who say that they are feeling completely calm, not worried, and thinking everyone else is worrying too much or blowing things out of proportion.

In fact, I talked with someone, not from our church or even our community, but he shared honestly that he did not understand why people were, in his words, overreacting.

But he was living in a secluded area, had everything he needed, didn't even have to do much other than get some food when needed, and said he was just going to ride it out and make the most of his time.

Yet, when I asked if his wife caught the virus, how would he feel. Then his demeanor, attitude, and even voice changed. He wanted to put up his super confident and trust in God and have no worries or fears kind of approach. But then he said that though he didn't have to think or worry about that, it would be terrible since they were out in nowhere and getting to the hospital would be difficult, as well as for his age and health, he would probably not survive if he got it too.

I did not mean to bring him for his joyful, care-free, and pie-in-the-sky attitude down, but I also wanted to express how his family, friends and so many had real fears, that most people weren't

over-reacting, some hoarding yes, but that it wasn't media hype, but rather when someone does come to him when they've lost a loved one to COVID-19, that he won't be in denial or say it's their fault for not being safer or something else or nothing at all. Rather that even with his mixed emotions, that he would still be able to still be the presence of Christ to those who need it the most.

And that is what Jesus calls us to do. That's what Jesus did. Go back and read the accounts of Jesus and his life. You'll find that though he was a non-anxious presence and one who gave peace, true peace, that he also had empathy, compassion, and such love that no one could deny that even when he said to fear not, that in doing so he wanted to be their source of courage, hope, confidence, and peace, if they would choose him.

Jesus in the midst of people yelling at him to make everyone stop shouting words of joy, his kingship, and salvation; in the midst of his own thoughts of the cross and suffering and taking on the sins of the world; in the midst of his deep joy of knowing that the cross would mean forgiveness, freedom, salvation, and eternal life; and in the midst of knowing there would be those who opposed him, denied him, persecuted him and his followers, and knew would even kill him and his disciples; Jesus did not attack, did not threaten, did not accuse, did not curse, did not plan revenge, did not harbor and hold bad feelings or grudges, did not throw a tantrum or blame everyone else, and did not do what may be typical of retaliating. Rather Jesus was here to find, heal, and save. No one could really understand that.

So Jesus fixed his eyes on the cross, even though it was difficult, and with all the mixed emotions he had within himself, as we know he had and expressed at the Garden of Gethsemane. He is told that he also had the joy in knowing we'd be saved through his suffering and death that would promise a victorious resurrection.

He wanted to gather his lost sheep. Jesus wept for all who were lost. Jesus said to God in heaven to forgive even those who crucified him in saying that they didn't know what they were doing.

Of course they didn't know what they were truly doing! It was not until they saw how Jesus died and how the heavens darkened and the earth shook, and tombs were opened and those who were once dead were alive. They said surely he was the Son of God.

And in life, so many do not know what they are doing when they hurt others! That is not an excuse or condoning of any actions that hurt others.

During these days, when we face our mixed emotions filled with fear as well as joy, moments of happiness as well as sadness, hopes and disappointments, times when we feel God is with us and is blessing us and when we feel God seems to have abandoned us or even punished or cursed, like Job, we must remember who is our Rock, and Salvation.

Jesus is our solid foundation who did not walk away from what was not only excruciatingly painful on so many levels, but also something that others would not believe or accept. He came to the world to save his creation, but they rejected him and killed him. Not all of course since there were his disciples and other followers. And there were several religious leaders that came to place their faith in Christ.

We know it was the plan for Jesus to be crucified and then to rise again. But it always shocks me when I re-read what happened and how cruel people were to Jesus when he did nothing wrong, not one thing. In fact he helped, fed, healed, and even raised people from the dead.

So that is why on Palm Sunday, we find there were many who experienced the Jesus who fed them, helped them, taught them, healed them, and even brought some of them back to life. They went wild with excitement, thankfulness, even tears in their eyes for they thought the day of salvation had come where they would no longer be under the power, oppression, occupation, and suffering of others, the Roman Empire as well as some of the religious leaders who lorded it over them. They would later be disappointed that Jesus had a bigger plan. Jesus came to save them, but not from the worldly troubles so much as from the spiritual ones, saving them in the most important way possible by saving their very souls.

So as we approach Easter during this Holy Week, let us all be aware of the mixed emotions of that time when Jesus journeyed to the cross, as well as all the mixed emotions we are experiencing during this time. Let us not be discouraged from celebrating Christ as we give thanks for what he did in his life, in his death, and of course in his resurrection! For it is Christ who even said about people being silent when it is time to celebrate, that the rocks would shout out if they didn't!

My prayer is that we all draw closer to each other, closer to God, and closer together as the Body of Christ. May how we act in light of all the mixed emotions, showing everyone that even though we are not all together physically, in spirit we are one and that Jesus Christ and his love and salvation are real, true, and ultimately what we and the world needs for these and all times. Let us choose to continue to celebrate and give thanks to Jesus, knowing no matter what that we are safe and secure in him. Amen.