

## ***Reflections from a United Methodist Pastor***

**April 13, 2025**

**Title: From Majesty to Mocking**

**Texts: Matthew 27:27-31; Matthew 5:10**

The Beatitude for this week (Matthew 5:10) makes me a little nervous. Is the Kingdom of Heaven only for those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake? If so, I am in trouble. I have a hard time thinking of a time when I was persecuted because of my Christian witness.

The focal text for this Palm/Passion Sunday (Matthew 27:27-31) makes me a little nervous. These verses are about what happened to Jesus after the hoorays and hosannas of Palm Sunday. He got arrested and humiliated. I have had a few days of hip-hip hoorays, but no one thought to follow that up with personal attacks and criticism. I keep wondering: Is my witness so shallow that no one wants to shut me up?

The way Matthew tells the story makes me a little nervous. After the Palm Sunday celebration (Matthew 21:1-11), the disciples begin to disappear from the story. By the time we get to Matthew 26:69-75, even Peter has moved toward denial of Jesus. "I do not know the man!" Peter exclaimed. When has my witness made it look like I did not even know Jesus?

But thanks be to God! In the midst of all of my weakness and failure comes the word that Jesus went to be crucified for the likes of me (Matthew 27:31, 35). And, peeking ahead to next week, we know that this is not the end of the story.

If our Lord went through all of this, should we be surprised that we who follow him may have the pain of the journey as well as the joy of victory?

When I was growing up, we often had a big to do on Palm Sunday and made little, if any, reference to the days that followed. Most congregations now observe this day both as hosanna and horrendous.

One thing is clear in this account: Jesus did not waver in his mission. Even if we did not already know the outcome of resurrection, we would have to be grateful for his steadfastness. The example he set for focus and faithfulness should be a model for us. If all in the story were sweetness and light, we would wonder what these values mean in our own world where all is not sweetness and light. But I checked the morning paper; all is not sweetness and light in our world. And the call to us is still a call to focus and faithfulness. So be it.

**What Someone Else Has Said:** In *Multiplying Love* (Abingdon), Paul Chilcote writes: "The love we need to embody is the self-sacrificing love we see in Jesus."

**Prayer:** As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: "Hosanna!...and..."

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