

Prayer Transformation Ministries Email Newsletter – Teaching for 4/4/07

Palm Sunday Cautions

The throngs of people who shouted “Hosanna” as Jesus entered Jerusalem were just a few days later the same people who cried “Crucify Him!” We may wonder how such a change of heart could occur so quickly! How could the triumphal entry suddenly turn into such rejection and misunderstanding of Jesus? One day the people were blessing Jesus with shouts of “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” A few days later they were denying Him and running scared.

Of course, the Church today is much wiser and more mature. We would never miss the day of the Lord’s visitation or misunderstand the intended purposes of His Kingdom. Right? Or is it possible that we are capable of similar mistakes or traps that ensnared the people back then? Perhaps some *Palm Sunday cautions* are in order for us in today’s context.

First Caution: Failure to See

Immediately after the account of the triumphal entry, Luke 19 records the sobering scene of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. He was weeping because the people had the opportunity to welcome Him, but they “...did not recognize the time of God’s coming” (Luke 19:41-44). Jesus was most likely addressing the religious leadership of His day—the Pharisees and Sadducees. The spiritual leaders were busy keeping up the religious programs and traditions. But they were blinded to the reality that God was no longer in their religious systems—He was standing in their midst!

None of us is exempt from falling into the same trap. We become so familiar with our traditions or get so caught up in the “machinery” of our religious activities that we can become insensitive to a profound movement of God. If it doesn’t fit with our goals and plans and what we projected out over the next three years, we may miss that God is building His Kingdom around us.

Second Caution: Distorted Expectations

Luke 24 is the familiar story of the disciples as they walked on the road to Emmaus. As the risen Jesus approached them, “their faces [were] downcast” because of their disappointment over Jesus’ death. At that moment, they did not recognize Him as the Savior of the world. They had witnessed Jesus’ death and burial, and it appeared He was not their long-expected deliverer of Israel (vs. 21). They were now on their way home, disappointed and discouraged. Their expectations of Jesus were vastly different from what they had witnessed. They missed the moment of His resurrected truth.

This same distorted expectation could explain the emotional disposition of the crowd that went from shouting “Hosanna” to “Crucify Him.” How easy it is to be disappointed with the Lord when His response does not meet our expectations. Whether it is our expectation of healing or a specific answer to prayer, we can let our disappointments define our reality of Jesus and Kingdom purposes. We can miss our moment of the truth of the power and glory of Jesus’ resurrection.

Third Caution: Misdirected Priorities

Coming down into the city of Jerusalem from His “triumphal entry,” Jesus entered the Temple and immediately drove out those who were “making merchandise” in the temple area (Luke 19:45-46). Jesus was confronting those who had built a prosperous industry of selling the animals that were required for people to sacrifice according to the Jewish laws. They were becoming rich off the religious obligations of God’s people.

Jesus confronts them by telling them that they had missed the very core of what the Temple was all about—to be a house of prayer for all nations. How far their priorities had strayed from the Lord’s intentions! How

easy it is for us, even in our good intentions, to stray from God's purposes. Eventually we find ourselves with priorities in our lives and ministries that are no longer even close to the Lord's heart and desire.

Don't Be Deceived

Sometimes we read Scripture from a distant perspective, believing that the stories and situations are far from representing our own hearts and lives. But the reality is that our hearts are similar to those who hailed Jesus one day and turned on Him the next.

As we reflect on the truths of Palm Sunday, let us ask the Lord to keep our vision clearly on Him. Invite Him to keep our expectations in line with His ways and His Word. We desperately need our priorities to fall in line with His Kingdom. It's a good caution for all of us.