

“Palm-Passion Confusion”

Are you confused today? If so, I don't blame you – because this Sunday in the Church Year (Palm-Passion Sunday) just seems to have confusion built into it. The organ joyously dances us into the sanctuary – and then it turns somber. We hear the crowds shout their “hosannas” – and then – “crucify, crucify Him.”

What is one to think? What are we to do, to believe? Maybe we should look to our fellow followers of Jesus – to the disciples of His day. But they are a finicky bunch. Take the Twelve disciples for example – voicing a great confession of Jesus at one moment – and then having to be put back in their place the next.

And the crowds? Well, which crowds? The crowds that shout the “hosannas” or the ones who scream bloody murder?

How about we step back and look to the Lord – to His Word – which is a lamp unto our feet and a light for our faith. But what does His own Word say? It too can be mystifying.

The Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians: “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God ... For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men ... For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” (1 Corinthians 1:18, 25; 2:2).

This Gospel of the Lord – it's foolishness to the unbeliever – it's foolishness to our own sinful nature. Why would God do such a thing for those who don't deserve it – more than that – for those who rebel against Him, who call for the death of His own Son? And knowing our own sinful rebellion – why would we look to Him and not run away?

Folks, in all of this, it's not about what we do. We are stone-cold-dead sinners like Lazarus – which means that He who is the resurrection and the life must go to work – and He does – to save you.

He is the gracious Lord who loves to hear and answer our prayers. He hears the cries of “hosanna” – which means, Lord, “save us now.”

Now, did all who cried out in this way have the same salvation in mind? Were some thinking that this Messiah would “save them now” by riding into town and driving out the occupying Roman forces? Possibly. Probably. But the Lord is not dependent upon fickle man and erratic crowds – He simply goes to work, doing His Gospel thing.

Save us now? Crucify Him? Man is so easily manipulated – his sinful desires are quickly stoked into a raging, uncontrollable fire. He is undependable, unworthy, unholy. Are you going to stake your life on such a man – on yourself – when eternal salvation is on the line? You’d be foolish to do so, and it will not turn out well for you if you do.

But the Lord knows what to do – and what He is going to do – “for you.” “Crucify Him”? That’s exactly what He has in mind, and has from the beginning – to send His only-begotten Son into the flesh so that He can be crucified – to die upon a tree, as the curse for all sin – and from that tree to produce life-giving fruit “for you.”

The Son of God comes to Lazarus you – to “save you now” from sin, death and the grave. God the Holy Spirit directs you in faith to this Lord Jesus Christ – who “saves you now” with His crucifixion-forgiveness – “for they know not what they do.”

But He knows what to do – what He HAS DONE for you on Calvary – and what He DOES for you here at Immanuel.

The Lord Jesus Christ has come riding into the midst of you to answer your prayers – to “save you now” by giving you His true Body and Blood from the Tree of Life – who speaks His absolution into your ears, releasing you from all sin, and resurrecting you to a new life.

By virtue of your Baptism into Christ – every day is Palm-Passion Sunday for you. He “saves you now” by washing you in His grace – He unites you to His resurrected-never-to-die-again-body so that you may live eternally, including your body which will be raised to life again on the Last Day.

Until then – Palms and Passion “for you” – for you are His died-for ones – saved through the blood of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen “for you.”

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.