

The Successful Life of Our Crucified Savior

From Pastor Daniel Randall

Jesus came riding triumphantly into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday as the picture of success. But then, just a few days later, he was nailed to a cross like a common criminal. What happened?

To get into this a little deeper, let's telescope in on Holy Week on that dramatic scene in the gospels where Jesus stands before Pontius Pilate. What a contrast! How different these two men are! Now, notice something here. If you asked some folks today who knew nothing of the story to point out the successful one in this scene, using our present day standards for measuring success, they would point quickly to Pontius Pilate. They would document their choice by underscoring Pilate's wealth, his position, his power, his authority, his political clout, his fame and yet they would be wrong! So very wrong!

Look at Jesus! He stands there poised, confident and unafraid. He is facing death, but His strength never wavers. Just think of it, an unfair trial for an innocent man, lies, plotting, conniving, bribed witnesses, political intrigue, jealousy, hostility, hatred, and a mob scene and in the face of it all, Jesus exhibits an amazing quality of inner peace and strength and calm. They betray Him, deny Him, taunt Him, beat Him, curse Him, spit upon Him and nail Him to a cross and He says, "Father, forgive them they know not what they do!" Now, that is strength of character, isn't it? That is inner peace. That is real success.

By present day standards of success, Jesus wouldn't measure up so well. He was born in a stable. His mother was a peasant girl; His father a carpenter of little formal schooling, Jesus wrote no books, held no offices, and claimed no political fame. He traveled very little. He taught, but many scoffed at His teaching. His closest friends betrayed Him. And then almost before the story got started, He was nailed to a cross like a common criminal and put to death.

That doesn't sound like a success story, does it and yet 2,000 years later, people bow at His name and look in amazement at His perceptive teaching and His sacrificial death. People's lives are changed because of Him! Why? Because He showed us what God is like and what God wants us to become and the word is love. He who is greatest and most successful among you must be a servant, a servant of God and a servant of others.

Some years ago, a church group toured China. One Sunday morning, they had the privilege of worshipping in a Christian Church in Guilin, China. It was packed with worshipers. They had gone to the church unannounced and the people accepted them warmly in the Spirit of Christ. The minister preached a three-point sermon in Chinese and though they couldn't understand all of what he was saying, they got the point of it. He was lifting up Jesus Christ as the Lord of Life and the Savior of the world. Then after the sermon, everyone stood and sang the closing hymn "More Love to Thee O Christ, More Love to Thee." Think of it. There they were - twelve thousand miles away and singing that familiar hymn with that Chinese congregation. Some of them were holding their hymnals upside down but they were singing it together powerfully. One of the members in that party said, "It dawned on me in a fresh new way, the incredible impact of Jesus Christ on this world!"

So, if you want to be a success then accept Christ into your heart as your personal Savior and know the inner strength and peace that comes from something that money cannot buy and status cannot secure. If you want to be a success then live every day, every moment as a servant of Christ's love.