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**The Sunday of the Passion**  
Year B

**The Liturgy of the Palms**  
Mark 11:1-11  
**The Liturgy of the Word**  
Isaiah 50:4-9a  
Psalm 31:9-16  
Philippians 2:5-11  
Mark 14:1-15:47

### Cheering

One of the great themes of Palm Sunday is the dichotomy of emotions from the beginning of the readings to the end of the readings, which is then played out more fully throughout this upcoming week - this transition from joy to sorrow; the stark contrast between the elation of the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, which we reenacted here today with our palms, and the sorrow of his public execution by the end of the week.

And on both ends of that spectrum - joy and sorrow - we heard cheering. We see the joy and elation of the disciples and the people as Jesus enters Jerusalem for the Passover. Expectations were extremely high for this Messiah. The weight of the Jewish populace was increasingly being laid upon him. They were believing that Jesus was the Messiah chosen by God to free his people.

At the beginning of the week it was, "Hosanna! ... Hosanna in the highest heaven!" They're cheering aren't they?

However, by the end of the week it was, "Crucify him!"

Typically we would think of 'cheering' as being associated with joy, so how can I say that they cheered "Crucify him!" Sadly, it is because at the beginning of the week many were joyful for his arrival and by the end of the week many were joyful for his death.

That being said, my thoughts today are really quite simple.

I want us to think of things in our lives that *we* have cheered for.

Think about that for a moment and then we're going to share briefly some about those moments in which you have cheered. And when I say "cheer" I mean outward and visible demonstrations of enthusiasm - clapping, yelling, waving your hands, dancing, etc. - not just the inward emotions associated with it.

For instance, I have cheered for / at:

- Sporting Events
  - o My children playing soccer
  - o For teammates
  - o The Olympics
  - o Professional / College sports
  - o The under-dog
- Concerts - "Encore!"
- Pep Rallies
- Political Candidates or Rallies
- Ceremonies - Graduations

It would seem to me that most, if not all, of these things that we have just listed as times we have cheered can generally be divided into a handful of categories based on the motivations behind our willingness to express our outward and visible support for something?

- **Shared Values** (e.g. political or social causes)
- **Shared Identity** - “This is my team / my tribe!” (e.g. sports teams [we dress like them in their uniforms])
- **Shared Relationships** (e.g. your children’s part in the school play)

What struck me as I was thinking on these things this week was this question, “Have I ever cheered for Jesus?” Have I ever expressed outward and visible joy and enthusiasm for him? And I’ll be honest, I was a little taken aback by that thought because I don’t know that I necessarily have, or at least all that often, and when those instances did happen they usually were when I was with other Christians who were all doing the same thing. I have cheered many other things in this life and I suddenly realized that the thing that I proclaim to be the most important in my life, the thing that shapes who I am and who I want my children to be is not something that I get all that publically excited about very often.

And I thought, Hmm. What does that say?

I wish we had more time to unpack all of this and to analyze what can be helpful and what can be unhelpful in asking that question. But I think there’s something there, isn’t there?

The things we cheer the most can be one indicator as to what we value the most. What gets us most excited? What gets us the most worked up? Answer those things and you will quickly get a glimpse of that which you value the most in this life. This isn’t a perfect analysis of life, but it sure can shed some light on some things pretty quickly.

What are our values?

Where do we find our identity?

With whom are we enthusiastically in relationships with?

These are important questions to dive deep into to shed some light on what we value the most in life.

But the other aspect of value is the important question of where we place our hope. What we value the most can also be one indicator of what we place our hope in the most as well. And as great as many of these things in our lives can be - and as wonderful as it can be to cheer them on - are any of them truly worthy of our hope? Do any of them reunite us with God himself? Creator and Sustainer of all things. Are any of them stronger than death?

That is what we need to wrestle with today and this week. This week is a battle of life and death; a battle of joy and sorrow; a battle of hope in the temporary things of this world or hope in the permanent things of eternity - eternity in a new creation the way that God perfectly intends it to be. This is a week of evaluating where we place our hope, where we place our value, where and what we cheer the most.

I pray that all of us will humble our hearts and our minds this week to hear the Holy Spirit who will illuminate for us the greater things for us to hope in and the One who can get us there - Jesus Christ.

May your Holy Week be blessed. *Amen.*