

✠ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. ✠

The crowds did not know. They did not know for what point and purpose Christ comes into Jerusalem. They see Him riding a donkey, coming as a king in victory. They rejoice because their earthly king is here. In their minds, He would free them from the Romans. He would free them from earthly difficulties, usher in a new golden age of Israel, and reign from the temple in Jerusalem. They did not know, but they should have. They did not know that Christ, their Lord, comes not to rule an earthly kingdom, but His kingdom is of heaven. They did not know that He comes not as a king to conquer over the Romans, but to conquer Satan and death. They did not know that He comes to die. And as they laud and they magnify and glorify His name, as they sing praises hailing Him, they get it all wrong. They did not know, but they should have.

Because the signs are clear. Yes, they became seeking a king, but a king who is not Christ. A king who would fulfill their earthly desires, would fill their bellies and overthrow the oppressive government in which they lived. They came seeking an earthly king, not a heavenly one. The signs are clear, though. For the Lord has indeed spoken. The prophets have been sent. Isaiah speaks of the suffering servant and foretells clearly the crucifixion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Old Testament from Genesis prepares us for Christ, the suffering servant and our true king, who reigns from a cross.

And our temptation is to be kind to the crowd, to not speak too harshly of them, because how could they possibly have known? The scriptures were not clear enough, we might think. But you should know better as well. For you not merely have the Old Testament, you not merely have the prophecies, but you have the cross. The greater sign has come. Christ has been crucified and risen for you. The Lord not only has spoken, but he has written. He has revealed his will for mankind for you in the scriptures. And not only has he sent to you prophets, but he has sent to you pastors to open and to explain the scriptures to you. He has sent to you men to preach and proclaim the fullness of God's counsel.

That you might not seek Christ, you may not seek a Christ who is earthly, whose glory is limited to this world. But that you might seek a Christ. You might wave palm branches and rejoice for your Lord comes to you, not on the back of a donkey, but upon the altar, in bread and wine, in his word and in water. The crowds should have known better. What they desired to see was not the true Christ. And we should know better than to make God into an earthly king who fits our ideas and

thoughts of what our Lord should look like. We should not try to force God into the box that we desire Him to be in, but seek Him in the Scriptures, for there He has revealed who He is and what He has done for us.

That brings us then to the Holy Gospel according to St. John. Now among those who went up to worship the feast were some Greeks. So they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Some Greeks, not the children of Abraham who should know better to whom the prophets were sent, but Hellenists, who had come in contact with God's Word and desired to see Christ as He was.

When Jesus is told that men desire to see Him, when Philip goes and tells Christ that Greeks have come seeking Him, what is Christ's response? **"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit."**

Here Christ is not ignoring Philip's question. He is not ignoring the request of the Greeks. They desire to see Him, but He is instructing them where He is to be found. Where they can truly see and know Him. For His hour is at hand. The hour of His glorification has come. And it is not in the great crowd in the loud shouts of praise and the honor of men. It is in His death. It is in His dying which bears much fruit. By this, and by no other means, the Father glorifies His name. In this, the cross is the glory of God revealed and seen. It is for this that Christ comes to Jerusalem, to suffer and die, to be crucified.

And so if we, like the Greeks, desire to see Jesus, let us not seek God apart from Christ and who He is. Let us hear his response to Phillip and see him where he is revealed most clearly, in the passion, let us know nothing other than Christ crucified. Let us not seek God or desire to have a God who is not like our Lord. Do not desire a Christ according to the flesh, but subject the flesh to God's will. Subject the flesh to God's command and God's will.

For we are tempted to be like the crowds seeking glory according to man. But I tell you we are to rejoice with the Greeks who come to see Jesus and saw His crucifixion.

Seek a Christ according to God's Word. A King not as a glorious King arrayed in great splendor who rules with a scepter in his hand and the finest of shoes upon his feet. But if you desire

to see Christ, see a King who rules with pierced hands and pierced feet. A King whose crown is not forged with the finest of gold but is forged from a thicket, from thorns.

Do not be offended by Christ's passion. Christ's passion is everything. Christ's passion is the atonement of man. It is the justification of sinners. It is the penalty of our sin and the price he willingly pays. If you desire to see Jesus, to receive from him life and salvation, eternal life, look no further than the cross. Look no further than the crucifix here on our altar, which stands as a reminder to you of the glory of God. Not Christ sitting upon a splendid throne, but Christ hanging from a tree, cursed by the world. For what do we receive from the hand of our Lord? His body and blood give for you for the forgiveness of your sins.

The scriptures are clear. You are not like the crowds seeking Christ as an earthly king. You do know for you have been taught, who Christ is, He has revealed Himself to you. You know who Christ is and what Christ has done for you. By his death, by his passion, He has called you and redeemed you; He has defeated your enemies and conquered over them not with the sword but with his blood outpoured and his body broken. If you seek Jesus, seek the cross.

✠ In Jesus' name, amen. ✠