

Homily for Palm Sunday

Well, it's spring. And you can tell it, because there're lots of spring-themed commercials on TV. One of them I saw was for a John Deere riding mower. And the tag line, in case you haven't seen it is: "It's not how fast you mow. It's how well you mow fast!" In other words, you could have the world's fastest lawn mower. But, if it doesn't do a thorough job, it'll end up costing you more time in the end, because you'll have to go over it again to get what you missed.

Well similarly, I heard in prayer the other day: "It's not how well we do, but how well we do when life doesn't go well!" It's nice when things go according to our plans, and everything works out just right. But often times, things don't go the way we plan. Have you ever been running late, and were stuck behind a Sunday driver? How *well* did you do? Or, maybe someone challenged you on something you did, and you didn't like hearing what they had to say. How *well* did you do?

In the Gospels Jesus teaches: "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same." Similarly, if you're loving, peaceful, patient, and gentle when things are going well, so what! Anyone can do that. It's when things don't go well, then that's the test of our mettle as Christians. Are we loving, and peaceful, and patient, and gentle then? Or do we sink into one form of sin or another?

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem seated on the back of a donkey, the people were so enamored with Him. They were waving palm branches, and shouting “Hosanna”, a Hebrew word which means “save us, we pray”. And Jesus received their words of praise. But yet, barely five days later that same crowd could so violently turn on Jesus and shout, “Crucify Him”! And how well did Jesus do when life didn’t go so well? Well, Isaiah in our first reading today prophesies about this: “I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting.” Well, how about Peter? How’d he do? Well, not so well – denying his Savior three times!

Like Peter, when the pressure’s on, we can easily stoop to our worse. We sin. We back bite. We hate. We fight. And any one of us can fall into even serious sin. Perhaps this is on some of your minds today with regards to a fellow parishioner, who was recently in the news. We are all sinners. We are all in need of God’s mercy. And that’s precisely why Jesus came into Jerusalem, knowing full well that they would all turn on Him.

But God’s perspective is not ours. He doesn’t fixate on us when we’re at our worst. Rather, He keeps in mind that because of sin, we so often live out of a place of woundedness and therefore wound others. He knows that we are more than our sins – we are His. And that’s why Jesus came to Jerusalem and died on the cross. That’s why He continually calls us to repentance. That’s why He implores us to turn our sins over to Him so that we can live out of our truest identity as beloved children of God the Father.

In our deepest need, our worst sins, and our darkest hour, God does not abandon us. Rather, He beckons us to come to Him, whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light. This Tuesday evening at 7pm, we will have our parish penance service. Around 10 priests will be here that evening for you to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation. I ask every single one of you to go to Confession to know Christ's mercy. It's only in having a personal experience of God's mercy that we can truly be merciful to others. My friends, we are the Body of Christ. And as Church, we're called to be Jesus to one another. It's not just one family or two who need us. There are many in our midst, who need us to be Jesus to them. But we cannot give what we do not possess. And we only get to keep what we freely give away. God bless you.