

Reflection - Palm Sunday / Sunday of the Passion  
24-03-2024  
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Isaiah 50: 4-9a      I follow God, and he will protect me

Psalms 31: 9-18      Lord I am in trouble, save me.

Philippians 2: 5-11      Jesus humbled himself, and is now exalted Lord.

Mark 15: 1-39      The Passion of Jesus

### Introduction

Today I would like to focus on our sentence from Scripture:-

At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2.10–11

For those who are Christians these are beautiful words to hear. As Paul was writing to the Church in Philippi, he really wanted to encourage them. No doubt that is why these words made it into an early Christian Hymn, and why they are found in many Christian worship songs today.

But of course, these words make a big claim. It doesn't just say some knees and some tongues but "every knee" and "every tongue". We know that this is not the case now, so we can infer from this that Paul is talking about something that will happen in the future. And as Christians, Jesus gives us hope, not only for the here and now, but also for whatever the future may hold. So let us think about today's sentence of scripture, in light of today's readings.

### Huge difference in Jerusalem in one week

What a difference a week makes. This can be said about many things. But today, as we begin holy week, we hear of the huge differences of the reactions to Jesus.

Today being Palm Sunday, in the liturgy of the palms we hear of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. We hear of people shouting, "Hossanna", and placing cloaks and branches on the road as Jesus enters the city. But by the end of the week the Religious Leaders have whipped the people into such a frenzy that they are yelling, "Crucify him!", when Pilate asks them what to do about Jesus.

How fickle the crowd seemed to be. Changing so much within only one week. If we put ourselves into the same situation, I'm sure we'd like to think we wouldn't go with the crowd yelling "Crucify him!", but how easily do we give in to the pressure to conform in our lives?

Although we live in Australia, and we are not openly persecuted for going to church on a Sunday, we may face challenges to our faith in Jesus. When we are challenged, I pray we will be enabled to stand fast in our claim that, "Jesus is Lord!"

### Jew's tended to be very exclusive

We may not always acknowledge it, but we know that Jesus was a Jew. The Old Testament is of course still the Jewish Scriptures. And the Jews tended in Jesus time to be very exclusive. The scriptures told them to care for the foreigner among them, and provide hospitality, but in the time and culture of Jesus day nations seemed to stick to themselves unless they became more powerful and were able to conquer and rule those around them. The Jews though, in their scriptures were told that they were to be a light to the nations. It was through them that the world was to be brought to know God, but they were naturally more concerned for themselves.

We know now that the cross of Jesus is for the whole world. Everyone needs Jesus. So as Christians we are not meant to keep this "Good News" to ourselves but rather share it. In a previous Lenten Study on Isaiah I found these very relatable questions:-

- Do I only admit to my "inclusion zone", people who are like me and people I like?

- Do I make a place for those who are different say, in age, musical tastes, dress, or nationality?
- What am I doing now to make sure that “all peoples” have the opportunity to enter into God’s house?
- Do I examine my life regularly with the aim of actively planning to please God in all I do?

### Story about Cross

Today we have heard about the Cross of Christ, and I wanted to share with you a story, that was shared by a previous Bishop of North Queensland at his father’s funeral. His dad had been a Christian during his life. He had been ill for many years. In his later years, one of the practices he set up for himself in his house, was to always be able to have a cross in sight. This meant that no matter where he was in the house, in which he spent most of his time, he would always be able to look at a cross. He had set up his own house, in a very physical way, a means by which he was able to spiritually keep his eyes on the Cross of Christ.

This is also a challenge for us. Do we always have the cross in our sight?

### Conclusion

As we acknowledge what Jesus has done for us in the crucifixion which we heard again today, I pray we will continue with the Hope that the resurrection offers.

At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2.10–11

Amen.