

“Nothing for Some, Everything for You”

John 12:12-19

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Holy Week is upon us, and we begin our remembrance of our Lord’s passion with the procession of palms as He is welcomed into the holy city of Jerusalem to shouts of “Hosanna!” The people gathered around in that moment were pilgrims coming to Jerusalem for the Passover feast, and many had been with Jesus when He raised Lazarus from the dead. So, you could understand their fervor as He came into the city riding on a donkey. Those who had seen Him raise a man from the dead had spread the news of what He had done, and everyone wanted a glimpse of the One they would proclaim “even the King of Israel.” Even the Pharisees could not ignore what was happening as the Son of God begins His journey to the cross. They said as the crowd gathered, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.” There is nothing for them to gain by rebuking Him or trying to disperse the crowd. It was too late, and they had already committed themselves to putting Him to death. His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, as the Pharisees attest, was bringing nothing for some, but everything for you.

There’s a line from an old movie that some of you may know that goes, “Don’t forget what happened to the man who suddenly got everything he always wanted...He lived happily ever after.” That motto is one that this materialistic world would say is worth living by, and your sinful flesh would agree. Living a life engrossed in the things of the world is not a pathway to true happiness, despite the desires your Old Adam wells up within you. The world and your sinful nature are tools that the devil uses to tempt you into believing that the more things you obtain in this world, the more you indulge your pet sins, and the less you focus on your faith, the better off you’ll be. The evil one wants you lost in your sin, gaining nothing, but believing you are getting everything you have ever wanted.

That’s the problem for the Pharisees in our text this morning. They have so fully engrossed themselves in their supposed keeping of the law, that they have gained absolutely nothing by it, except for unbelief. Their self-righteous boasting and condemnation of Jesus has amounted to the equivalent of a single flea on the back of a dog in the face of the massive following that He has gathered. Christ enters the city being proclaimed as the triumphant King of Israel, and that destroys every narrative that they have sought to spread among the people. Because the people have seen the works of the Son of God, and have believed in Him. But that does not mean that the Pharisees

have given up. They still scheme and plot to kill the One who has given them so much heartburn since His ministry began 3 years earlier.

They will work in the shadows to put Jesus to death, turning some of those same people that welcomed Him with shouts of “Hosanna” against Him, as they instead shout in the court of Pilate, “Crucify! Crucify!” The crowds will turn from joyous belief to shameful rejection of the One in whom their faith is meant to be placed. Because without Christ, there is no faith. Without belief in the Son of God and His vicarious atonement, there is nothing but darkness and sin. The world, the devil, and your sinful nature love the darkness that comes in the absence of Christ’s light. They want you kept there with the Pharisees so that your unbelief sends Jesus to His death, rather than glorifying Him as God of very God.

But that is where the devil gets things all wrong. He believes that by Jesus going to His death he has won some great victory over God. “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked (Gal. 6:7).” The salvific plan of God has always been that His Son would come down from heaven, incarnate of the virgin Mary, so that He would be the perfect sacrifice of redemption. The devil didn’t send Him to the cross. You didn’t send Him to the cross. Pilate didn’t send Him to the cross. Our Old Testament lesson makes it plain, He set His face like a flint toward the cross, where His shame would not be for nothing. So, the devil in his deceiving lies makes the world and the sinful flesh believe that Jesus is dead because of them. He even tried to obscure the truth from the disciples. It says in verse 16 of our text, “His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about Him and done to Him.”

When Jesus was glorified is the moment on Calvary. It is the lifting up of the Son of Man, all coming to fulfillment just as Jesus told them. Jesus overcomes the power of the devil at the cross, and in His victory over sin, death, and the devil, the eyes and minds of His Apostles were opened to the truth that the evil one has no power. His attempts, though far-reaching and powerful, are like that of the Pharisees. He sees that he is gaining nothing. The world has gone after the Christ—the One who has died to redeem the world and to vanquish His power over it. Faith is being spread by the Word of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the people who waive their palms and bless the name of the Lord have heard it, seen it, and believed it.

All of this, He does so that the Son of Man would be glorified, and God be glorified in Him (Jn. 13:31). In giving Himself over to death, Jesus is indeed glorified as the perfect Lamb of salvation. Though bloody, beaten, and scorned, He does all of it for

the glory of the Father, not for Himself, and for you. He has given everything for you so that you would have everything that is His. His innocent blood was the price to be paid so that the Father would call you a true son, bearing the same honor as Jesus who gives you His inheritance. Forgiveness, life, and salvation are yours because of what He has done, and that is not nothing. It is everything! There is no need for the things of this world if you have not faith in Jesus. If you do not receive the free gift of forgiveness which He won for you by His bloody death upon the cross, then you have nothing, and you have nothing because of what you have done in rejecting that gift.

In receiving everything that the Lord went to the cross to give you, you no longer have fear. You no longer fear the evil one and his flaming darts, and you do not fear the consequence of sin. Christ has paid the price, taken the punishment and consequence for your sin. Condemnation is so far removed from you because your Lord and Savior has placed your sins as far from you and Himself as the east is from the west (Ps 103:12). You no longer live a life of hopelessness as those who have no faith walk this world. You have hope in the promise that you have received eternal life for the sake of Christ. You no longer have to face the reality of eternal death, because He has granted you eternal life by His blood. There is only hope, joy, and love for you as a baptized child of God.

Christ went to the cross for the sins of the whole world, but the sad truth is that so many reject that gift. It is indeed nothing for some by their own doing, but everything for you because of what He has done. We pray that the Holy Spirit would enliven their dying hearts to faith in Christ, that His death would be everything for all, instead of nothing but condemnation and eternal death for those in unbelief. It is the will of God that all would be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth—the truth that Jesus has given Himself into death to purchase them back from the ownership of sin. By the use of the means of grace, the Lord's body, the Church, proclaims that truth to all who would hear, calling sinners to repentance and faith in the one, true God.

Through the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, you hear that your sins are forgiven for the sake of God's Son. In the physical Word of the Holy Sacraments, you see the forgiveness that is proclaimed in them. By the application of water and the speaking of the Word as Christ has instituted, the Old Adam is drowned and the new man rises in faith from the Baptismal font of His grace. As you eat the Supper which He instituted with His Apostles in the upper room, you partake of the feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom which shall have no end. His body and blood, given and shed for you upon the cross is the source of your salvation, and the blessed truth you share with the whole host of heaven as they come down among us during that glorious meal. Here, at this

table prepared for you by the Lord, forgiveness, life, and salvation are not just spoken about, but actually and physically received and applied to you by faith.

Jesus came into Jerusalem aboard a lowly beast of burden as He rode on in majesty toward the place of His shame. The hill of Calvary is the place of your redemption, and at the cross Jesus will die in pain and agony as He defeats the power of sin, death, and the devil. No longer will those powers hold sway over His people, because by His holy, innocent, and precious blood, you are given the treasure of forgiveness which God gives to you as a free gift. Satan's accusations fall upon deaf ears, for the Lord Almighty has covered you in the robe of His righteousness, and you have been declared justified for the sake of His only begotten Son. And at the beginning of next week, after three days in the tomb, your Lord Jesus will burst forth in victory from the bonds of death. He has given you everything, and that leads to nothing but eternal joy as one who has been baptized into His death and resurrection.

He is the resurrection and the life, and that is what you receive by faith in those blessed waters. Resurrection and life are yours already, and will be fully realized for you when Christ comes again. I can't say it much better than our first communion hymn closes, so I will let it close with the reality of what is truly yours according to His merciful goodness:

“Hosanna in the highest!”
That ancient song we sing,
For Christ is our Redeemer,
The Lord of heaven our King.
Oh, may we ever praise Him
With heart and life and voice
And in His blissful presence
Eternally rejoice.

Amen.