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Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“BY OUR HANDS? FOR OUR SAKE! THE CROWD”
Luke 19:28-44

On Sunday they shout: {Lk 19:38} **“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”**

On Friday they shriek: {Lk 23:21} **“Crucify him! Crucify him!”**

Their mood shifts from joyful praise to homicidal rage in under a week. They degenerate from supportive crowd to ugly mob in five short days.

How can people who acclaim Jesus turn so quickly and completely against him?

To be sure, these groups are not exactly identical: the enemies who incite the mob to scream for the Lord's death do not shout {Mt 21:9} **“Hosanna!”** on Sunday.

Even so, there appears to be notable overlap. There is evidence of significant connections between the Sunday crowd and the Friday mob.

What provokes the change?

Notice what the crowd shouts on Sunday: **“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”** (Luke 19:38). **“Hosanna to the Son of David!”** (Matthew 21:9). **“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!”** (Mark 11:10). **“Blessed is the king of Israel!”** (John 12:13).

Their shouts echo those of another crowd 1,000 years earlier. {1 Ki 1} When David was nearly dead his son Adonijah defiantly crowned himself king, even though his father had already chosen Solomon to succeed him.

David got wind of it and orchestrated Solomon's immediate coronation. After the new king was anointed he led a joyful, raucous crowd of soldiers and servants into Jerusalem as he rode the royal mule.

Solomon entered the palace, sat on the throne and began to reign. He had his brother executed, and his brother's supporters were either banished or killed.

Many in the crowd rightly see Jesus as king and crown, but misinterpret the nature of his kingdom and the means by which it will be established. Many expect Jesus to march into Jerusalem and conduct a Holy War, take the throne, and create a much better version of the kingdom of the world, like Solomon.

But what does Jesus do?

In Luke 19:41-44 He weeps over Jerusalem, **“If you...had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.”**

Next, in verses 45 and 46 He enters the temple and drives out the merchants. This is the moment they have been wishing and praying and planning for! The Messiah has gathered his forces and taken back the temple for God. Surely he will capitalize on his momentum, kill the pagan Roman usurpers and slaughter their ungodly Herodian lapdogs.

Instead, He leaves the city, squandering the opportunity the LORD Almighty has afforded him! Israel's glorious future of health and wealth and security and power crumbles before their eyes.

The crowd's excitement and enthusiasm fizzles. It is obvious now that Jesus of Nazareth will *not* meet

their highest expectations, will *not* fulfill their fondest dreams, will *not* make their deepest hopes real.

By Friday, it is easy for Jesus' enemies to stir up this crowd to scream "**Crucify him!**" and to demand Barabbas' release. Barabbas has taken part in a bloody rebellion against Rome. Barabbas has already killed for freedom. Barabbas will do what Jesus won't.

This kind of thinking leads to the total destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Worse, it causes most of Israel to reject the long-awaited Messiah and his salvation.

Thank goodness *we could never be so blind!*
Could we?

When I was very little, I observed that Jesus never danced (unless it was square dancing). Above all, He did not drink alcohol (the wine was, at most, lightly fermented grape juice, and He drank it because the water was unsafe).

In elementary school, I saw that Jesus would not sit in the back of the bus with the foul-mouthed boys and lewd girls. He would not be mean to them, but He would keep his distance to avoid guilt by association.

I soon began to recognize that, with some exceptions, Jesus was just the opposite of whatever the Catholics said about him.

By the time I got into Middle School I perceived Jesus as a white, middle class, political conservative who stood with the Moral Majority.

I was convinced I saw Jesus clearly. In fact, I was viewing him through the cloudy lens of flawed culture, sinful fears, and distorted hopes.

Everyone is prone to the mob's blindness, even Christians. Had we been there, we might have shouted "**Crucify him!**" in our disappointment and anger.

That's the bad news. (And, the Gospel is almost always bad news before it is good news.)

But there is also great news in this!

1st, Jesus died for our sake, even knowing that we would seek to remake him in our image. His love is stronger than our sinfulness!

2nd, Some in the crowd remained true to Jesus. The disciples let Jesus down, but they did not call for his death. Given a second chance, all but Judas proved their loyalty and love for Christ. And, in time, they learned who Jesus really is. In God's mercy and kindness we can do the same. We can be part of the Sunday crowd but not the Friday mob.

"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" This is the word of the Lord.