



Welcome to whip-saw Sunday, as Kelly Nelson, pastor at Christ Lutheran, put it. Well named. In less than one hour we go from “Hosanna! Blessed be the one who comes in the name of the Lord!” to “Crucify him. Crucify him.”

Before we really even have much of a chance to celebrate the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, we are the crowd crying for mob justice – we want the spectacle of trial, of debasement with a crown of thorns pushed so deep into the skin that blood runs down, to watching morbidly while a man dies a painful death for daring to call us into a new way of being.

It’s a set-up: one day riding high on the crowd’s adulation and the next being arrested and sentenced to die – and for what? For asking us to love one another. Is that a crime? Why do we take so much pleasure in seeing someone brought so low?

I asked that question of a friend who spent her career investigating and then writing pre-sentencing reports. In her work the offender had been convicted and the question now was about the sentence to be served. Her work included reading the charges made, talking with the perpetrator, talking with the victim or victim’s family, and gathering and analyzing information from doctors and other professionals in order to arrive at a recommendation for a judge when imposing a sentence. It was hard work emotionally, and like many other law enforcement professionals, she is slowly adjusting to retirement while dealing with nightmares particularly around some of the last homicide cases she worked.

But why is it we sing out “Crucify him! Crucify him!” when we don’t even know the one brought up on charges? Is the message of Jesus truly so difficult for us? Unfortunately, then and now, the answer appears to be “yes.”

Perhaps part of the answer is that as human beings we have a hard time accepting that God truly does love each one of us because that means that you and I and the person living on the street are all equal in God’s eyes. We say we believe in equality, but do we really when it means that we are not one on top of the heap? There seems to be something about us as humans that we want to be the one on top. We want to be special.

The sadness of today is that we are special – but each one of us is special in God’s eyes. No one of us is more special than any other. That’s the sticking point, isn’t it? Just like a child asking a parent: do you love me? Do you love me more than my brother? I’m your favorite, aren’t I? And the parent responds: I love each one of you. And we adults know how that is. Yes, I love each child- differently and independently but differently. And sometimes that isn’t enough for us.

Jesus rides into town on a donkey with hosannas and waving palm branches this morning. He leaves us today having been arrested, tried and tormented and crucified. As we read and hear the Gospel, put yourself into the crowd. Why are you part of the mob? What brought you out to see this man Jesus abused and put to death? What, in your life, have you celebrated only to turn on it and put it away from you? Where are you in this Gospel?