

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 3/25/2024

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, March 26 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for any that you perceive to be enemies. Call on the HOLY SPIRIT to help you pray for those whom you dislike or hate. Ask GOD to give you the heart of JESUS who could forgive HIS enemies even as they took HIS life.*

What could have caused the crowds to turn on JESUS so quickly? One day, HE comes riding into Jerusalem and is hailed by all, as we just celebrated Sunday. And just a few short days later, the call for HIS death. What happened that could have caused this change?

It's necessary to understand what they expected from JESUS. They were under the control of the Roman Empire which had taken control of their land, demanded that they behave in specific ways, and forced them to pay taxes to pay for their occupation. They wanted to be rid of these unwelcome foreigners who had taken over their homeland. The prophets had foretold of one who would come to free the people and bring justice and peace to their land. The Romans had come on war horses while the prophets predicted a MESSIAH who would come riding a donkey. JESUS appeared to be meeting those expectations. HE arrived in the way foreseen by the prophets. The crowds rallied around HIM. Finally, they believed the Romans were going to be forced out.

But JESUS didn't act or, to be more accurate, didn't act the way they wanted HIM to. On Thursday night, HE spoke to HIS disciples about loving one another. Elsewhere HE had called for HIS supporters to love even their enemies. HE even washed Judas' feet along with the other disciples and said HIS example was what HIS followers were to be about. HIS message was just not what they wanted from HIM.

Think about the implications. Love the Romans, the occupiers? Pray for them?

Think about the implications today. Jews and Palestinians loving each other and praying for each other? Ukrainians and Russians? How about in our own country? We may not be occupied as were the Jews of JESUS day. We may not be formally at war with anyone right now. But there are many who are telling us who we should fear, who we should hate, who we should oppress and force out. There are plenty of folks in our own land that according to some are only to be worried about and despised. And JESUS says love and pray for them? How comfortable are we with that message?

It's one thing to hear JESUS call for love and forgiveness when we come to church on Sunday. It's another to have to put that into practice on Monday.

The crowds were looking for a political MESSIAH, one who would act in ways to bring about the results they wanted and in the way they expected. It didn't take long for them to see that this was not the SAVIOR they had hoped for. Thus, they rejected HIM. What happens when we truly discover that JESUS is not quite the MESSIAH we are looking for? What do we do when confronted with HIS call to love and forgive in a world that tells us something else? Will we reject HIM? Will we just set HIM aside until next Sunday?

This week which we call Holy Week is not just about what happened 2,000 years ago. It is about considering our discipleship and commitment to GOD's Kingdom as presented by JESUS. Are we willing to follow this JESUS? Are we ready to go to the palaces where HE goes? Are we prepared to die to the world's view of how things should be and then be raised the world that JESUS foresees and calls us to work for? The crowds in JESUS' day apparently were not. How about us?

In CHRIST's love,

Pastor Jeffrey