

Stand Out From the Crowd

Today I'd like to share on the topic, "Stand Out From the Crowd." We're going to talk about fashion and how terrible I am at it, the story of Palm Sunday, why crowds and popularity are such a big deal, and how we can make the right decisions when it comes to crowds.

I am the least fashionable person that I know. I have one requirement for clothes – is it comfortable. If it's comfortable, I'll wear it, if it's not, I don't want it.

I have a terrible sense of fashion, of what's in, what's not in, what works together, what clashes, none of that makes any sense to me.

I'm bad at fashion, but I still have to wear clothes, so I have started to notice a few things about fashion. For example, fashion, for whatever reason, repeats itself.

What was once popular 20 years ago is now popular again. For example, baggy jeans. 10 years ago, if you were wearing baggy jeans, you were way off trend. Skinny jeans were the way to go. But now, baggy jeans are back. That's the style. But the crazy thing is that in the 1990s, baggy jeans were the trend.

So if you have a pair of jeans from the 1990s, it's time to pull them back out because they are IN and you'll look at least 4 times cooler.

But if you bought a pair of jeans in 2010, put them away, you can take them out in maybe 2030 and they'll be popular again.

Fashion is so weird because it changes so quickly, and it goes from one extreme all the way to the other. Is it fashionable? Is it trendy? Is it popular? Well, that depends. It might be popular today, it might be the most fashionable item right now, but in a year, in 6 months, in two weeks, who knows, all of that could change overnight.

Fashion just moves suddenly, and we all just go along with it. No one consults us, no one asks for our permission, we don't get a say in what is or isn't trendy, it just happens all around us. Suddenly, all the celebrities are wearing it, all the stores are stocking it, every ad you see is about that fashion item, and you have no option but to go along with it.

And in six months, it'll all change again.

I tell you all of this because Jesus actually faced a change in popularity within a week. Within seven days, He went from one extreme all the way to the other.

See today, we're remembering Palm Sunday. And Palm Sunday is all about how Jesus entered Jerusalem.

All four of the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, tell us about Jesus coming into the city of Jerusalem.

In Matt 21:1-11, it tells us that Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem on a donkey, and as He rode into the city, in verse 8, it tells us,

⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

“Hosanna^[b] to the Son of David!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”^[c]

“Hosanna^[d] in the highest heaven!”

¹⁰ When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?”

¹¹ The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

There was a crowd of people all praising Him, worshipping Him, celebrating Him. And the thing is, this is a good thing. This was a great response to having Jesus enter their town, they were celebrating and worshipping and it would've been this amazing atmosphere.

1. The Crowd Isn't Always Wrong

Do you know that sometimes, what's popular, isn't wrong. Just because a crowd is into it, it doesn't mean that the crowd's wrong. I think sometimes we can assume that when there are a lot of people saying something, or when it's confronting to see a large number, that the crowd must be wrong. Because let's face it, crowds are intimidating. We don't like to be against a large group of anything, let alone people.

But sometimes, the crowd isn't wrong. We should always consider the crowd, just in case it's the right crowd. Sometimes, people gather over the right things.

The key to knowing whether you're in the right crowd is to not be part of a crowd because it's popular, but because of the principles.

In Luke 19:37, it says, “When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen.”

In other words, the disciples were the ones who led the praise. When you have the right people leading the crowd, you know it's the right crowd.

The disciples, who were the right people, were leading the crowd in worship, which was the right principle.

If the right people are leading the crowd in the right principles, it might be worth listening to them. It's worth considering why there's a crowd, and if the people leading it are people of character, people who you can trust, and if the crowd is established on Godly principles, then maybe the crowd are doing the right thing.

For example, maybe you've seen a crowd of people at a connect group, they're being lead by someone trustworthy, and the group is growing closer to God - that's a crowd worth being a part of. Or maybe you see people helping out at youth and young adults ministry and there's a good crowd of leaders and they're growing all of these young people closer to God - that's also a crowd worth being a part of.

There are good crowds! There are groups of people that you should be a part of, there are good crowds. Just look for the right people doing the right thing based on right principles. Sometimes, the crowd isn't always wrong, sometimes it's the right crowd.

2. You Can't Commit to Inconsistent

In John 12, it tells us that Jesus came into Jerusalem as King, being worshipped, 5 days before the Passover. In John 13, we know that it's on the Passover night that Jesus is arrested, and the next day, Jesus is put on trial, crucified, and buried.

In other words, 5 days after Jesus is celebrated and worshipped, He's put on trial.

Luke 23:13

¹³ Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. ¹⁵ Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. ¹⁶ Therefore, I will punish him and then release him." ^[17] [\[a\]](#)

¹⁸ But the whole crowd shouted, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!" ¹⁹ (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.)

²⁰ Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. ²¹ But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

²² For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him."

²³ But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. ²⁴ So Pilate decided to grant their demand. ²⁵ He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.

It's crazy to think that in 5 days, the crowd went from, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord", and now they're saying, "crucify Him!" The scripture tells us that Pilate gathered the priests, rulers and the people. There was another crowd gathered, shouting to crucify Jesus.

Crowds are inconsistent and they change their mind all the time. The trend will change, what's popular today won't be popular tomorrow. The crowd will grow overnight and disperse in a day. You really can't depend on a crowd because the crowd can change its mind quickly and suddenly, without warning and without reason.

You know sometimes, we place our identity in a crowd. And we put our identity in a crowd because initially, it feels like the right group of people, it feels like a cause we can get behind, and we really go all in because there's a sense of momentum within the crowd. We get on board with their hashtags, we buy the t-shirt, we drink the kool aid, and go all in because of the crowd. Everyone's doing it, it feels right, so we're all in.

But then, the crowd changes. Maybe people leave or the direction changes or the values aren't there or the principles are different. Or maybe we just suddenly wake up and realise that this isn't where we belong and it's not what we were actually looking for.

Crowds have no convictions, they're unpredictable, and they can change without your consent or your input.

So rather than invest and commit to the crowd, we need to commit to something stable and reliable, something that doesn't change. Or better yet, someONE who doesn't change. It's not that crowds

are inherently bad or wrong, but don't commit yourself to a crowd, commit yourself to the One who doesn't change.

Psalm 111:7-8

⁷The works of his hands are faithful and just;
all his precepts are trustworthy.

⁸They are established for ever and ever,
enacted in faithfulness and uprightness.

God's precepts, His principles, His way of living life, are trustworthy and established forever and ever. In other words, they will last forever, they won't change, they will remain reliable. God enacts them in faithfulness and uprightness, so whenever you put God's word into practice, the result will be the same. God will be faithful in enacting His word, you never have to worry about whether the rules have changed.

If you put your trust in the crowd, you don't know what'll happen or how it'll change, but if you put your trust in the principles of God, you always know what you're going to get, you always know that God will be faithful, you always know that His truth will endure, you always know that God will be consistent in His love for you, in His goodness towards you, in His faithfulness to His promises, in His answers to your prayers, because God is faithful and God is trustworthy, and God is reliable.

Don't commit yourself to the crowd, commit yourself to God. And the crazy thing is that God will always, whether good or bad, draw a crowd. Wherever Jesus went, there were crowds of people, some were for Him, others were against Him, but there was always a crowd. Don't commit to the inconsistent crowd, commit to a faithful God.

3. The Crowd Isn't Always Right

In Luke 23:18 it tells us that the whole crowd shouted, "Away with this man! (meaning Jesus) Release Barabbas to us!" The crowd was now against Jesus. Next week, for Easter, you'll hear more about Jesus' death and resurrection, but what we read here is that the crowd was so loud that Jesus ended up crucified. They made it happen. And even though, ultimately, God used it for good, the crowd was wrong.

Just because it's popular, and just because the crowd is loud, it doesn't mean that it's right. And I think we all realise that and we learnt that pretty early on, but to be honest, whenever I see a crowd, I always get that feeling that I SHOULD be a part of it or I SHOULD be doing something because everyone else is part of it.

And sometimes the sheer volume of the crowd makes us question what we're doing or what we're thinking, it makes us question whether we're in the right crowd or not.

But what's popular and what's loud isn't always right.

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It's crazy to read that Pilate, knowing that Jesus had done nothing wrong, that He was completely innocent, gave in to the crowd. The crowd was so loud, so insistent and unrelenting, that Pilate gave them what they wanted. The crowd was loud, but the crowd was also wrong. I mean, they sentenced an innocent man to death simply because they were loud, not because Jesus deserved it.

Don't allow the volume or the numbers to intimidate you into changing your mind. Look at the principles, not the popularity. If it's not aligned to the Word of God and to His principles, that's the wrong crowd. It doesn't matter how loud they are or how many there are, even if you have to stand on your own, if it's not based on the Word of God and His principles, it's the wrong crowd.

4. Jesus addresses the crowd, but He calls the individual

Jesus was no stranger to crowds. And while this interaction was the most significant in that it resulted in His crucifixion, Jesus had been surrounded by and interacted with crowds for most of His ministry life.

We read that Jesus would gather people to teach them, people would crowd around Him for healing, people would gather just to see what Jesus was going to do.

And every time there was a crowd, we can see that Jesus has compassion on them, He heals them, He feeds them, He looks after them. There was always a sense of care and concern for the crowd because Jesus acknowledged the crowd and responded to the crowd.

So while Jesus always cared for the crowd, He never called the crowd.

Luke 8:42

There's a story about Jesus walking through a crowd, and there were so many people that they're almost crushing Jesus. This is crazier than any mosh pit, because they're all crushing a single person. And as Jesus is moving through the crowd, with all these people around Him, it says that a woman who was bleeding for 12 years touched the edge of His cloak. Not His arm or leg or somewhere that He could physically feel a person, but the edge of His cloak. In the middle of this crowd, Jesus asks, "Who touched me?" And when nobody says anything, Peter, Jesus' disciple, tells Him that there are all of these people crowding and pressing up against Him, but Jesus says, "SomeONE touched me."

ONE. Jesus identified the ONE. In the middle of all of these people, He noticed the ONE.

In Luke 19, we read about Jesus entering the town of Jericho, and a tax collector, which meant nobody liked him, named Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus. But Zacchaeus was short, so he couldn't see over the crowd, but because he wanted to see Jesus, he climbed a tree to see Him.

The scripture says in verse 5, "When Jesus reached **the spot**, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." ⁶So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

There's a crowd of people seeing Jesus, and I love that the scripture says that when Jesus reached the spot, He looked up. What's the spot? Because what would make sense is that Zacchaeus picked the spot. The spot where Jesus could hear Zacchaeus call out. The spot where Zacchaeus could see Jesus. The spot where Zacchaeus could throw a fig at Jesus to get His attention.

The spot should be where Zacchaeus chose so that he could somehow stand out from the crowd and get Jesus' attention.

But the scripture says that when Jesus reached the spot, Jesus looked up and spoke to Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus climbed a tree to see Jesus, but Jesus saw Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus thought that he had it all figured out so that at that spot, he could do something so that he'd be noticed, but Jesus didn't need anything to get His attention. Jesus saw Zacchaeus and called out to him before Zacchaeus could do anything.

See Jesus never called the crowd, Jesus always called individuals from the crowd. You don't need to belong to a crowd to belong to Jesus, the crowd isn't a requirement for Jesus to notice you. Jesus notices individuals, Jesus calls individuals.

The crowd was crushing Jesus, but Jesus noticed the ONE. Zacchaeus wanted to get Jesus' attention from the tree, but Jesus called him before he could do anything.

Sometimes we get so obsessed over the crowd we belong to, whether we're doing what's popular, and we highlight the importance of the crowd and public opinion so much, that we can miss God calling the individual. God doesn't need you to be a part of a crowd for Him to call you. God sees you as an individual. God calls you out from the crowd, God identifies you individually, specifically, not as part of a group or because you agree with popular opinion or because you belong to something specific, God looks at the crowd, and He just sees you. He notices you. He calls you. He loves you. Not because of who you're associated with or because of who you're friends with or who you're connected to. He loves you because He loves you.

I want to challenge you today – crowds have their place and their purpose, but don't get caught up in the hype. Avoid the wrong crowds, but even with the right crowds, it's not as important as who God has called you, as an individual, to be. God created you uniquely, specifically, with an individual purpose and design for your life. It's so much more important to belong to God than to belong to a crowd.

Jesus closest friends and followers, His disciples, were called individually.

Matt 4:18 tells us how Jesus saw Simon Peter and Andrew. In verse 21, Jesus saw James and John. And when Jesus saw them, He called them. He didn't call the crowd, He called the individual.