

# The Great Shift

## Opening Text: John 12:12-13, 19-32

On this Palm Sunday, we will look at the moments that preceded Jesus' arrest and the cross. Jesus had, for 3 years, toured extensively around many cities of Israel. He had spoken like no man and done miracles like no other prophet before Him. Even His adversaries acknowledged His fame:

**V.19** – *Look, the world has gone after Him*

In verses 12 and 13, we see Jesus being received in Jerusalem by a great multitude ready to make Him King. They're shouting, *Hosanna! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord! The king of Israel!*. No wonder the religious leaders were nervous. The atmosphere surrounding that moment must have been electrifying.

### 1. 'Sirs we wish to see Jesus'

Suddenly, a group of Greeks that had come to the Passover, were caught up in the 'Jesus fever'. They too wanted to see this Jesus. They came to Philip and requested a private audience to see the 'famous' Jesus.

Interestingly, their request was met with a strange statement:

**V.23** – *“the hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified”*.

Something in the ministry of Jesus had shifted. Something bigger than anything they had ever seen was about to happen. He then started talking about the seed that needs to die in order that a harvest may come.

- a) The Greeks wanted to see Jesus, not necessarily because they wanted to follow Him but more out of curiosity.

(Acts 18:21 says that Greeks '*spent their time in nothing else but to tell of hear something new*').

The ministry of Jesus was not some 'circus of oddities' for the curious and Jesus hadn't come to build a 'fan base'.

'*Sirs we want to see Jesus*' would have been the right request if it had come from the right motivation and a pure heart.

**Matthew 5:8** - *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

- b) In **Luke 19** we read the story of a man who also wanted to see Jesus. His name was Zacchaeus. He was a short man who climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus. He was not perfect, far from it. He was a sinful man with a bad reputation. However, to Zacchaeus Jesus said,

**Luke 19:5** – “Zacchaeus, make hast and come down, for today I must stay at your house”

Interestingly, the word Zacchaeus means “pure one”. Maybe Jesus saw the purity of his motivation. Through that encounter, this man changed his ways and became a follower of Jesus. The pure in heart will see God.

- c) Herod was also someone who sought to see Jesus but with the wrong motivation:

**Luke 23:8** - *Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him.*

He saw Jesus but forcefully. His motivation was definitely not pure. As I said before, the gospel is not a circus of oddities, and Jesus didn't come to build a fan base. He came for followers.

## **2. Jesus defined His focus**

In **verses 23-27** of our text, we see that the moment Jesus made the statement that He was going to give His life as a seed, and that out of that seed there would be “*much grain*”, in other words a *great harvest*, He is defining His focus:

- a) He was focused not on the multitude of admirers waving palm branches, as honouring as that felt, but on the countless souls that He was going to rescue by offering His life. The harvest was His focus and mission. It should be ours too.
- b) He was focused not on becoming an earthly King and seat on an earthly throne but on embracing the cross. Jesus exchanged the glory of the throne for the shame of the cross. Sacrifice is a value of the Kingdom, convenience isn't.

## **3. Jesus defined who He is seeking (v.26)**

I find it so interesting that nothing that Jesus said to Phillip and Andrew seemed to have anything to do with the request of the Greeks:

- In verse **23** Jesus speaks about His death, and then,
- in verse **26**, He speaks about *followers*. His focus was definitely not ‘fans’, admirers, the curious, the crowds of palm-waving people but He was seeking followers:

**V.26** -*If anyone serves Me, let him **follow Me**; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honour.*

Jesus never said, “I will build my fan club” but He said, *I will build my church*. Jesus came to build a church of followers, deeply committed disciples who serve Him and His purposes.

Jesus could have ridden the wave of applause that led Him to Jerusalem. There was enough political momentum to even claim the throne of David. The crowds were with Him.

- a) However, how important is a crowd in itself? The truth is that a short time after the triumphal entry of Jesus in Jerusalem, the same crowd who admired Him, also shouted *crucify Him, crucify Him*. That right there is the difference between a fan and a follower:
- b) Loyalty and allegiance define a true follower.

**Luke 22:28** - *But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials.*

**John 12:26:** *If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.*

- c) Jesus defined ‘following’

In this age of social media, you can click “follow” and just as easily also click ‘unfollow’. However, Jesus defined ‘following’ in ways that imply deep commitment and complete surrender to Him as Lord.

**Matthew 10:37-39** – *37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and **follow after Me** is not worthy of Me. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.*

## Conclusion

As we centre our attention over this coming week on the cross and resurrection of Jesus, let us remember some of the things we learn from the narrative that led to those events:

1. The pure in heart will see Jesus
2. As believers in Jesus we need to align our focus with His, regarding the things that matter most to Him: souls! He was the seed planted so we could claim a great harvest of souls!
3. Let us renew our commitment to be true followers of Jesus.

Jesus loved unconditionally everyone, He healed everybody, He reached out to all kinds of people: tax collectors, prostitutes, Jews and Gentiles. However, He never concealed the fact that He wanted His people to become true followers – not just palm-waving admirers, sympathisers, or fans. In these last days, with all that is coming upon the world right now, being a fan of Jesus will not be enough – we will have to be a company of Spirit-filled committed followers of Jesus!

