

Sermon 2007 Palm Sunday  
Text: John 12:12-19  
Theme: "Tis Easier to Hail than to Hallow"

Jesus arrived riding into Jerusalem and the crowd was going wild! Shouting Hosanna! Waving Palm branches. Throwing their cloaks on the ground before him. Some knew that he was the one who raised Lazarus from the dead and they wanted to see some more of that kind of power. Some noticed that he, like King David, was riding in on a donkey – the signature of a humble king coming to his people. Some were surely just all caught up in the spectacle and grabbed some palm fronds and started waving too. Then of course there were the Pharisees who saw him as a huge threat and knew that he had to be killed if their way of life was to be preserved.

Now how come, when Good Friday came around a few days later, all those other people had suddenly vanished? The Pharisees were more true to form than anyone else. They had long wanted him dead, but when Pilate asked what he should do with Jesus, where were all those Palm waving followers now? All Pilate heard was "crucify him!" The Pharisees had banked

correctly. They knew that it's a whole lot easier to hail than to hallow.

We all gather around here on the weekends and shout to Jesus. We sing hymns. We pray prayers. We do our own kind of Palm branch waving. But this is a pretty easy place to praise Jesus. The rubber meets the road in Pilate's Court. It's easy to hail Jesus as our king and Lord. But it is not as easy to hallow him – that is hold him as holy in our lives – particularly when that means sacrificing something else.

All the confirmands who will confirm their Baptismal promises this weekend have heard the vow they will be asked to take before God and this congregation of believers.

***"Do you intend to continue steadfast in this confession and Church and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it?"***

What I am asking is this, "do you promise to make Jesus holy in every aspect of your life and in fact die before you would put him second to anything else?" That is the vow that all of us who are confirmed have taken. We did not promise to make Jesus holy in our lives when it was convenient to do so or when it wouldn't matter one way or the other. We promised to hold him

as the holy center of our lives every moment of every day. It would have been unimaginably difficult to step forward into Pilate's court and to be the lone voice shouting to free Jesus. You would have been marked and consequences would have followed.

It is still horrendously difficult to step forward and to be the voice for the outcast, the strength for the weak, the voice of right in the face of unpopularity. You and I are still called every day not just to hail Jesus as king but to hallow him as the Lord of our lives. That means telling bosses and teachers and coaches and friends and family that Jesus comes first and work and fun and practice and games all come down the line from Jesus. That means facing the consequences for doing what is right instead of what is easy. That means pushing down desires and pleasures and all manner of temptation because it is inconsistent with hallowing Jesus name. What our confirmands are promising and what most of us have promised is no small thing. How will they ever be able to keep this promise? How will we?

Kevin, Calvin, Veronica, Courtney, Brian, Dana, you are about to make a promise before God and this congregation that no mortal can keep. I guarantee that you will fail. There will be

times when it is too hard for you to hallow Jesus' name. But that is why he offers us forgiveness every week. Every week Jesus stands at the altar and says, "your sins are forgiven. Take eat. Take drink. Receive my true body and my true blood. Receive the very power of God. Be refreshed by the waters of Baptism and remember that YOU ARE NEVER ALONE."

When Jesus hung on that cross and suffered the torture of Hell, forsaken even by God, he insured that you and I would never be alone. We are God's children – bought with the blood of his own son. We continue striving to keep our promise, striving to hallow his name not to receive salvation but because salvation is ALREADY OURS!

The confirmands leave this place today as the next wave of crusaders in this great adventure. Saved by the blood of Christ, hailing him as their king, forgiven again for their failures. They go forth to hallow him in their lives and so to become living witnesses to what Christ has done...AGAIN. Amen.