

A Sinful Change of Heart

Name: _____

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In this unit, we have been prayerfully reflecting on Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem the week of his arrest, Crucifixion, Death, and Resurrection.

Read Matthew 21:7–11 on page 19 of the Student Text. Then read Matthew 27:15–23 on page 26 of the Student Text.

How do the reactions of the two crowds differ between Matthew 21 and Matthew 27?

What could explain these two drastically different reactions to Jesus?

In Jesus’ day, the Jewish people were still waiting for the Messiah. During this time, they were under the rule of the Roman Empire. Many people anticipated the Messiah to be a great military and political leader. They expected this promised king to drive out the Romans and restore the kingdom of David. They thought this Messiah would bring great earthly prosperity and power to the Jewish people.

Think about what you have read in Matthew’s Gospel this year. Jesus did not fulfill the people’s hope in the way they expected.

- The people wanted him to drive out the Romans. Instead, Jesus conquered humanity’s true enemies: sin and death.
- The people wanted Jesus to restore the physical kingdom of David. Instead, Jesus established the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, a physical *and* spiritual kingdom.
- The people wanted earthly prosperity and power from this Messiah. Instead, Jesus made them rich in spiritual blessings, including God’s grace, which empowered them to conquer sin in their lives.

When the people in Jerusalem saw that Jesus was not fulfilling their expectations, they rejected him. They went from praising him to calling for him to be crucified.

As a Church, each year, we participate in the mystery of Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem and his arrest and Crucifixion on Palm Sunday. We begin the Mass on Palm Sunday by raising palm branches and praising Jesus as “Hosanna.” But in that same Mass, the Church reads about Jesus’ arrest, Crucifixion, and Death from one of the Gospels.

Unlike a normal Mass, as we sit in the pews, we say certain lines from Scripture during this Gospel reading. One of the phrases the entire congregation says together is, “Let him be crucified!” (Mt 27:22). We enter into the crowd’s sinful change of heart in Jesus’ day. We praise him as our Lord and Savior at the beginning of the Mass; then minutes later, we call for him to be crucified.

This example from Scripture invites us to reflect on how we accept or reject Jesus today. How often do we reject Jesus when he does not fulfill our expectations? Maybe we pray for something and Jesus does not answer our prayer in the way we expect. Maybe we plan our life to turn out one way, but God leads us down a different path.

Write about a time when Jesus did not fulfill your expectations in the way you expected. What did you find difficult about this experience?

Whatever the circumstances, we must learn to seek God’s will over our own. **How can we learn to seek God’s will in our lives over our own?**
