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Palm Sunday C
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What is Right, or What is Easy?

One of my favorite lines from a recent movie is delivered by a wise teacher to a student facing increasingly troubled times. The teacher tells his student this simple fact: “The time is coming when people will be forced to choose between what is RIGHT – and what is EASY.”

I love that line, because it’s not what we expect he would say. We assume he would say something like, “The time is coming when people will need to choose between what is RIGHT and what is *WRONG*.” But that’s not the choice anymore, is it? You, Tyler and Joey, are not growing up in your grandparents world, where the pressure to do what was right made doing wrong the hard thing. Now it’s so much easier to do the wrong thing, and so much harder to do what is right.

I. Peter

The apostles of the church lived in a time like this. They lived in a world where they had the best of intentions, but too often ended up taking the easy road.

PETER: “I’ll never leave you.” And then three times denies he ever even KNEW Jesus. It was easy to say he’d be with Jesus through thick and thin when he was surrounded by the disciples. But when he was surrounded by a hostile crowd, he caved. He did what was easy. He gave up the faith – and if he had died at that moment, he would have been separated from God forever.

US: How easy it is to say you’re a Christian when it costs you nothing. And my guess is that claiming to be a Christian has cost most people in this room hardly anything at all. But you and I – we know what it costs. I grew up in schools where being Christian was not the most popular thing in the world. It was downright weird. Especially since everyone I knew was sure there was no God or gods. Being Christian has cost me friends, relationships, time and money. Being Christian is now what is RIGHT, not what is EASY.

II. Pilate

PILATE: “I find no guilt in this man.” But what does he end of doing? Crucifying Jesus. Pilate was the governor. He could have simply said “NO.” He was, after all, backed up by the strongest military force in the world. He could have done what was RIGHT. But instead, he chose to do what was EASY. He let Jesus be killed. Why? The pressure of the polls. He caved to popular opinion.

OUR GOVERNMENTS: tends to do the same, don’t they? On abortion, on crime, on poverty, on sexual and family issues, on gambling, on drugs, we are watching our governments cave to popular pressure and to the polls. Choosing to do not what is RIGHT, but what is EASY.

III. Church

CAIAPHAS: “Blasphemy!” The leaders of Jesus’ church chose the easy way out, too. They refused to have a proper trial for Jesus, to consider all the evidence, to study Torah to see if Jesus’ claims had any validity. They PRE-TRIED him, found him guilty before he even opened his mouth. They did it at NIGHT, away from the CROWDS, almost as if they were afraid of the truth. Their primary concern was PRESERVING THE CHURCH at ALL COSTS - no MATTER WHAT GOD MIGHT HAVE TO SAY.

OUR CHURCHES are in danger of becoming the same, aren’t we? Aren’t we AFRAID of the crowds, our family and friends, and what they will think? Aren’t we afraid of what God might tell us he wants us to do? Our primary concern is no longer following the Lord, but preserving the Church at all costs. Instead of searching the Scriptures in a quest to remain faithful to God, we chart our own courses, and in the process become no different than the Kangaroo Court that tried Jesus. We have too often chosen to do what is EASY, instead of what is RIGHT.

IV. Jesus

Jesus had the choice, too. He prayed through that choice in the Garden of Gethsemane. He could have chosen what was easy – fighting his way through the Jewish and Roman authorities, and claiming his rightful throne by force. He could have tried for the Hollywood ending. But instead he chose what was RIGHT, rather than what was EASY. He chose to SAVE THE WORLD, and SAVE ALL OF US, rather than SAVE HIMSELF. By his suffering and humiliation we now gain access to the throne room of God. And it’s your belief in that single fact that you are confirming today.

And now he calls on you two today, Joey and Tyler, my brothers in Christ, to take up your cross and follow HIM. To choose what is RIGHT, not what is EASY. And that means **YOU** may lose **friends**. It means **YOUR government** may not like what you have to say. **YOUR church** may wish you’d stay quiet. But students are not above their master. If they did all those things to our master, what will they do to us, his servants?

Conclusion

One of my favorite proverbs is actually quoted twice in the book of Proverbs 14:22 and 16:25: *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”* That’s the Bible’s way of saying “Choose the way that is right, not the way that’s easy.” Jesus saved you by choosing the hard path – he now calls on you whom he has saved by his blood to follow on the same path. I hope we will help you to do that.

Amen.