

Passion Sunday *Psalm 31*
The Whispering of Many – the Scourge of Infighting

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Accusations fly. The rules are breached. The truth is stretched—conveniently, of course. Acrimony lurks under whispered tones. Wheeling and dealing are the order of the day. Common mistrust becomes the unlikely bond of otherwise enemies. The need to win...the need to be right...the need to grind the other into submission.

Victory at all costs. That's the way of the world and our own sinful flesh.

Where are we? A political convention? A board meeting? The voters' assembly?
Where are we? A TV courtroom drama?

Certainly the Atlantic District in the mid-1970's. Or post 9/11. Those times come to mind, too.

Quarreling, infighting, making the Law work for your own benefit, voices raised in sharp tones

Indeed, all of it is so. We have arrived at Passion Sunday.

If we were to place ourselves as onlookers at Triumphant Entry to Jerusalem, we likely would envision ourselves as one of the "good guys" — raising a palm branch and joining the chorus of those shouting hosannas. We automatically identify with the winning team. We pat ourselves on the back. We're the ones who *got it right!*

It's so easy to figure out exactly who the Pharisees are. *Them*. We can spot them; they're always the "other guys." We smugly delude ourselves into thinking *our* hands are clean, *our* intents are pure, *our* motives unquestionable. We forget the saying. "When you point your finger, there are three more pointing back to you." We fail to notice that we, too, are the "other guys."

When we take off our one-way lenses, we glimpse what Passion Sunday truly reveals to us about ourselves: our humanity, our fallen selves, the mess we've gotten ourselves into when quarreling and infighting rule. We erect barriers and start *taking sides* to show *who's* right and *who's* not — instead of focusing on his *spear-pierced side* to show *who's* forgiven. Look again: His Blood, shed...His forgiveness offered for all of us...His arms outstretched to break that barrier down and take you in.

With our eyesight adjusted by grace, we realize we not only have failed to join those who are raising praise-filled branches, but instead we find ourselves raising a sword, raising an eyebrow, raising our voices in accusation. We are in the company of those who fall asleep during the watch...fail to counter overreaction with peace...abandon hope. We do not remain faithful. We are sinners. We do that well.

Christ, however, *is* the Sinless One who took on ours. He did that well. In fact, His Blood did it all and His resurrection turned the tables — the sinless Son of God sacrificed – become sin itself - for *your* benefit, grinding *Satan* into submission.

Yes, it's victory at all costs. His Victory. Ours, too.

We know what came next for our Lord, not for taking either side, not to show who was right and who was not, but to show who is forgiven. We know that even as we continue to spend our time taking sides instead of focusing on His spear-pierced side, His Blood, His grace.

So See Him in this Passion Week: raising the cup and unleavened bread, walking to the garden, bearing the cross, then hanging on the cross, sinless Son of God become sin for *your* benefit, grinding *Satan* into submission.

Yes, it is Victory at all costs. His victory. For us. Praise God!!

-Nancy Graf-Peters