

Join the Crowd Luke 19: 28-40

Luke's Gospel is unique in that it records for us numerous occasions where Jesus had attracted a great crowd. Within the 24 chapters we find at least twenty different occasions where great multitudes are said to have surrounded Jesus. No matter where Jesus traveled during the short time He spent on this earth, a crowd or in Biblical terms a "multitude" would soon gather around Him.

The crowd that greeted Jesus on that first Palm Sunday was typical of the others he encountered. Luke is careful to point out that the crowd was made up of at least two groups of people - a multitude of disciples, who were shouting Hosanna, which means savior, and a multitude of Pharisees who were doing everything in their power to get them to stop. Some two thousand years later, the battle rages on.

Even before Jesus began His earthly ministry, there were multitudes around Him. The earliest occasion is found in 2:13, where Dr. Luke tells us that a **multitude** of heavenly host- literally an army of angels, appeared to the shepherds one night in Bethlehem. This army of angels was the first recorded crowd that followed Jesus. They were a heavenly crowd, united for a single purpose- to proclaim and herald the Good News. They announced the birth of the Messiah to the shepherds, who would take their words and make them famous- Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.

The next crowd Luke describes for us is in found in chapter 4. This crowd is nothing like the first. Far from the heavenly host, this multitude was a human crowd- a multitude of God's own people, gathered for worship in the synagogue on the Sabbath. Worship that morning began in typical fashion. The Scripture was read, the offering was taken and then a short sermon about God's grace was preached by a familiar Rabbi named Jesus. That's when things turned ugly. There would be no closing hymn that morning, for church let out early. 4:28-30.

The next multitude is described in chapter 5. Jesus was driven out from His hometown of Nazareth and is now at the Lake of Gennesaret where a crowd soon gathered around Him. This crowd was much friendlier than the one at Nazareth, and their number was so great Jesus had to use a boat as His pulpit. It was from that multitude of people that Jesus selected His first disciples.

Another crowd is found in a house in the city of Capernaum. The multitudes surrounding Jesus there were so great there wasn't even standing room left. As they pushed and shoved to get an opportunity to hear Jesus speak the roof suddenly opened up, and a paralytic man is lowered through the ceiling by some loving friends in an opportunity to meet Jesus. Jesus tells the man to take up his bed and walk.

We do not have time this morning to look at all the different crowds that followed Jesus, but we will consider the reasons why the crowds gathered around Jesus and who they were made up of. There is a purpose for discovering the answer to those questions, for even today multitudes are still attracted to Him, even though His body rose and departed from this earth more than 2000 years ago.

Some would say the primary reason so many people were attracted to Jesus was because of illness and a need to be healed. That may be true, for there are numerous examples of that very thing recorded in the Scriptures. Time after time, Jesus or someone claiming to possess His power would heal someone, and as a result word would spread and great numbers of people would seek the same. It still happens today, and sickness often draws us to His side. That goes for physical infirmities as well as emotional and spiritual ones. **Jesus offers hope to desperate people**, even when the doctors, friends and family have all but given up. We believe that Jesus can and does continue to heal, sometimes in ways we don't recognize. Are you one of those seeking healing of some sort this morning? Join the crowd.

Not every person in the crowds following Jesus was sick or in need of healing. **Others were there out of hunger.** One of the largest crowds that Jesus encountered was the estimated 20000 people He fed with 5 loaves and 2 fish. By helping His disciples feed the hungry, Jesus demonstrated that with faith, much can be done with little and that God provides the nourishment we need for our bodies. Those that recognize the power of that miracle understand that hunger is also a means by which Jesus draws people near to Him. That is true for the physical hunger that makes our stomachs growl and the spiritual hunger that makes our heart yearn for God. Are you hungry this morning? Join the crowd.

Still **others in the crowds were there out of curiosity**, wondering if the rumors they had been hearing could be true. They had heard unbelievable things about a man named Jesus. This Jesus wasn't afraid to touch a leper. This Jesus wasn't afraid to break bread with tax collectors and sinners. This Jesus wasn't a bit ashamed to drink from a Samaritans cup. This Jesus loved even those whom the Pharisees prevented from entering the synagogue. Could a tax collector, a harlot, a thief, a pimp, a drug dealer or a murderer really be forgiven and given a chance to start over with a clean slate? What about those who didn't have the right last name or lived on the wrong side of town and would be afraid to enter the synagogue for fear of being tossed out? Could people like that really have the chance to know God as well as those who were coming to church since they were 8 days old? They were curious. Could this Jesus really be different than all of the other gods and religions they had heard about? Do you have similar questions this morning? Join the crowd.

The question for each of us to ponder is not why the multitudes were drawn to Jesus, but why we are being drawn to Him. What need does Jesus want to meet for you? Healing? Hunger? Curiosity? A chance to start over? If you don't already know, the answer is Jesus gives us all those things and something greater than any of them. Jesus is seeking to meet the greatest basic need each of us have- the need to know that God loves us and will provide a safe and secure place to live on the other side of death, a place where there will be no hunger or pain or unanswered questions.

There is a huge crowd gathered at the feet of Jesus, and there is plenty of room for anyone else who wants to join them. Jesus wants everyone to join that crowd, the first crowd that Luke described for us. The crowd is the great army of angels that is singing Hosanna, Jesus Saves, Glory to God in the highest. Next Sunday we will see exactly how our personal invitation to join them was made possible. In the meantime, ignore the Pharisees and the others who seek to ruin our parade. Shout Hosanna, for if we don't even the stones will cry out. Amen