

***The great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem.*** *Going with the crowd* can be dangerous. Illegal for crowds to gather in current Covid restrictions, but nonetheless we have seen crowds gather in places across the world – the ugly crowd encouraged by their President to intimidate & take control of Congress; crowds of peaceful brave protestors brutally attacked by police & government troops in Belarus & Myanmar, innocent children & adults killed, vicious violent protestors in Bristol, drunken fans spreading disease. Outcomes not necessarily intended. ...  
...If you have ever been to a pop concert or a rally, you will have seen how the bands or speakers can *play the crowd*, working on emotions, whipping up hysteria. How real is the response? How dangerous is patriotism or nationalism? When does banter stop & sectarianism begin? How far are you influenced by opinions you heard in the pub or club in the old days, at church or on social media? Maybe a million Passover pilgrims gathered in Jerusalem from across the Mediterranean & Middle East - many joined an excited crowd. A preacher & miracle worker, rumours had spread & most were wanting this Jesus to be the Messiah, the Christ, someone expected to drive out the Romans, & make Israel great again. Both the Romans & the Jewish religious establishment felt threatened & by the end of the week, many who had been waving their palm leaves for Jesus, & shouting ***Hosanna*** a Hebrew expression that means ***Save us, set us free, we're looking to you to help us*** felt let down & shouted ***Crucify***. **Who do we listen to?** Or are our mind closed, closed to God's voice & way?

v.13-*The great crowd took palm branches & went out to meet Him shouting Hosanna! Hosanna!-Lord God, save us, heal us, deliver us, set us free but from what?*

- a) **from failing to recognise & communicate that Christ is real & dangerous, ..** ...  
**.. committed & loving? Or from a religious establishment that can seem mainly ..**  
**..concerned for its survival, keeping control & managing decline.** Ruling Sadducees party ...then didn't believe in resurrection or coming of the Christ but keen to keep in with the Romans so that the Temple could continue . cf some in the Church. **May still be more concerned with buildings than living stones & Christ's Kingdom.**  
**.. b) from trying to follow Jesus on our own terms.** (The convention for pilgrims ...  
...entering Jerusalem for Passover was to do so on foot. Jesus deliberately chose foal of a ...donkey in fulfilment of Zechariah 9:9 – ***Behold, your king comes to you, humble & riding ...on a donkey.*** The crowd recognised that Jesus was saying that He was/is the King, long- ..  
.. promised in the Bible, **although not the sort the crowds expected or thought they ..**  
**...wanted** – to restore the glory days of Israel & drive out the Romans.  
**...Do we want ...to follow Jesus only provided that** He fits in with what we expect or think  
.... we want–...on our terms?  
.....**Are we willing** to trust & live Jesus' way of self-giving love & service?  
....c) **from falling away when going gets tough & walking away from Jesus.**  
....d) **from ourselves & from the consequences of our sin.** 1 Tim 1:15; Is. 53:5

In vv. 17-19, John points out that many in that great crowd came to meet Jesus because they were hearing reports of His miraculous raising of Lazarus from the dead.

.....**Here & now, when we come to meet Jesus let us not just look to what Jesus can do for us but also ask how we may respond to the love that took Jesus to the cross that we might live in God's love.**