

DID YOU SEE I WAVED?

There's a wonderful number in *Jesus Christ, Superstar* sung by the people who are thrilled when they see Jesus as he makes his way to Jerusalem. Overcome with excitement, they sing,

Christ, you know I love you.

Did you see I waved?

I believe in you and God

So tell me that I'm saved.

You have to wonder if they went out simply to be part of the action, maybe dreaming of the day when they could say to their grandchildren, "I was there when the Messiah came into Jerusalem. I was there, and he saw me and waved. I was part of it all!" But how many of them had actually seen Jesus before, to say nothing of those who had actually heard him speak? There couldn't have been very many. What they knew, they'd learned via the grapevine, through rumour and innuendo. They asked no questions about Jesus' identity or the hidden meaning of his kingship. Crowds do not reflect; they react. In any case, whatever it was they heard or yearned to be true, it was enough to bring them out in droves. They cheered, but Jesus went riding on by.

Of course, we know that the tumult and shouting died and that the exultant joy of the first Palm Sunday soon passed. The faithfulness of the crowd was as deep as its understanding, and this crowd had very little understanding of what was going on. Even his own disciples didn't have a very clear understanding of what was going on. Only the one riding the donkey understood the mockery and murderousness that lay behind the acclamations. Only he knew how fickle and dangerous the crowd could be.

"Christ, you know I love you. Do you see I waved?" the crowd sings. Yet Jesus goes right on by, because they're just standing there, wanting to be noticed. We get that. After all, don't most of us actually spend quite a bit of time trying to get noticed?—by the boss, the good-looking person across the bar, the people we so admire and want to impress. And getting noticed by someone truly important, like a King or a politician or—most especially—a celebrity, is really exciting. It gives us bragging rights and a sense of superiority that not only were we there, but we were also spotted in a particular way: a nod, a wave, a handshake, or even some brief bit of conversation.

But sometimes we don't want to be noticed. Sometimes we fear what sometimes comes with being noticed: we don't want to be singled out, or have obligations laid on us, or even be asked to do something.

Christ, you know I love you. Do you see I waved? the crowd sings. Yet Jesus goes right on by. I wonder if one of the reasons that first Palm Sunday crowd fell away as quickly as it gathered is that they somehow sensed that, in fact, Jesus did notice each of them—not for who they pretended to be, but for who they really were. He did truly notice them, and asked them to follow him on this final journey. But they demurred. They were ashamed. They were afraid. It's one thing to wave with excitement but it's quite another to be summoned to leave what a person's grown used to, or to be asked about their deepest secrets. And so Jesus passed them by and went riding on into his terrible future.

You and I are no different. It's easy to get caught up in the acclamation and adoration as we seek to catch the eye of the Saviour as he passes by. We may even try to share the experience with another saying, "Oh, I've seen Jesus. I even waved as he went by. It was the greatest experience of my life. I'll never forget it." But what if the person we're talking to says, "So what happened next? Did he stop and talk? Did you follow him down the road?"

"Well, actually ... He said something but I didn't really get it. And as he leaned in close, I was kind of repelled. He had a wild, single-minded look in his eyes, as if he were willing to go to Hell and back for the sake of his message. Truth be told, I wish I'd never waved, because now I know he saw me, and called after me, and I'm frightened. I didn't really want to be singled out. He wasn't at all what I was expecting, and I'm afraid that I can't live like he lived and do what he did."

Christ, you know I love you. Do you see I waved? Here we are, you and I, and we have been noticed. We've been noticed from beyond the gulf of eternity, and even now the living Christ passes before us and sees us for who we really are inside, beneath the perfect and polished façade we strive to display. He turns to us and he looks us in the eye. In his face we see our own faces and read our own story. And as he passes, he says, "Child, I know you love me. Have you seen *I waved?*"

Have we? Have we seen? Shall we follow on our weary and dusty pilgrims' feet over the palms, through the perfumed waters before the Supper, and even to the hard iron spikes at noon? Shall we follow that far, at least?—only to find ourselves brought by him to the unending daybreak when we will understand what he has always known: that there is nothing we can do to attract his gaze, since from the beginning he has seen us with the love that endures all things and never fails, and has beheld us with the forgiveness that commutes even the sentence of death.