

“Give it a Rest”

The Theme, **“Give it a Rest”**, can have a variety of different meanings, depending on the context. Among those meanings, especially on Palm Sunday are:

1. If you **expect God to do your vengeful bidding, it won't happen** – **“Give it a Rest!”**
2. If you **want God to help you hate and destroy your enemies** – **“Give it a Rest!”**
3. If you **chase after money, things, power, and pleasure**, they will ultimately lead to **self-destructive and violent activities, as well as, harm others**, especially the vulnerable – **“Give it a Rest!”**
4. If you **want to give up on Justice** because fighting for it is challenging and costly – **“Give it a Rest!”**
5. If you want **busyness to control your life**, you'll **make yourself sick or worst** – **“Give it a Rest!”**
6. If you want **purpose and meaningful relationships** with God and other people, **it takes time** – **“Give it a Rest!”**
7. If you **want quality of life, a quality planet, and quality time with, and love for, one another** – take time from your busy – live to rest, evaluate, relate, plan, and act – **“Give it a Rest!”**

Let's break down those examples of “Give it a Rest” into two groups. **The First Group, 1-4, and the Second Group, 5-7.** The First Group can be perceived as being illustrated by the **Palm Sunday Event and the Happenings related to Jesus during the days following it.** The Second Group is part of the **Common Experiences of All People during Jesus' Public Ministry up through and into the future.** **They – those examples of the Second Group – are firmly based on our two Scripture Readings.**

Since this is Palm Sunday, we will start our examination of these different meanings of “Give it a Rest” by looking closely at the **First Group.** During Jesus' Public Ministry, **many of the Jews, expected the Promised Messiah to be the fulfillment of their desires for revenge against their Roman conquerors.** They believed God would help them to hate and destroy their enemies, especially the Roman Emperor and Empire. However, Jesus' message and actions did not validate those beliefs that as the Messiah, he would lead a violent revolution against the Romans! He disappointed many people because he came humbly and at the conclusion of the parade, he did not call either for God's angels or the crowd to form an army to destroy the hated Roman army. **Jesus lived “Give it a Rest!” with reference to the public's yearning for revenge and the violent overthrow of the hated Romans.**

Following the self-serving example of the Jewish Legalists – the Pharisees, the Scribes, the Teachers of the Law, and the Priests – the Jewish people expected the coming Messiah – the New King of the Jews to **chase after money, things, power, and pleasure.** Again, Jesus disappointed many in the crowd – communicated **“Give it a Rest!” because he remained humble, depended on the hospitality of people, and healed many without compensation during his Public Ministry.**

Finally, when referring to the **First Group of the “Give it a Rest!” examples**, the general population of the Jews' only hope for Justice was based on their expectation that the Messiah would overthrow the Romans. Otherwise, the tyranny of the Roman Empire and of the overbearing Jewish Religious Legalists weighed the people down and led them to see no purpose or potential for success in fighting for justice. **Since seeking justice would be very challenging and costly – most likely resulting in imprisonment or execution – very few people made any attempt to work for justice in Judea.** Nevertheless, Jesus continually sought to bring justice to the downtrodden and rhetorically attacked the injustice of the Jewish religious authorities. Further, later that week, Jesus gave up his life to bring greater justice and reconciliation among us. **His Life, Ministry, and Death communicated “Give it a Rest” to the expectation that seeking Justice for others was foolhardy because it was too challenging and too costly.**

Turning back to the **Second Group of the “Give it a Rest!” examples**, we return to what we have been emphasizing during this “Busy” Worship Series. As I said earlier, the last three of the “Give it a Rest” meanings are directly related to the **Common Experiences of All People during Jesus’ Public Ministry up through and into the future**. These meanings are supported by our two Scripture Readings.

Verse 8 of our Reading from Exodus includes one of the Ten Commandments, **“Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy.”** Keeping a holy time – a time to Rest and focus on one’s Relationship with our Creator is crucial to that commandment. If we are going to take the best care of ourselves and our Relationship with God and other people, then we need to **stop letting busyness take control of our life and “Give it a Rest!”** – take the time to focus on God, especially in Prayer and Worship and to give our bodies, minds, and spirits resting time. By doing that, we will **focus more on our purpose and meaningful relationships with God and all other persons**.

If you are tempted to side with the Jewish Legalist’s interpretation of the Sabbath Commandment, then verses 27-28 of our **Scripture from the Gospel of Mark is instructive**. The Pharisees were challenging Jesus because his Disciples were picking crops from a field on the Sabbath and the Pharisees believed that was a violation of the Sabbath Commandment. In addition to reminding those Legalists about what King David had done when he and his men were hungry, **“Jesus concluded, ‘The Sabbath was made for the good of human beings; they were not made for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.’”**

Yes, the Sabbath Commandment revealed God, Our Creator, wants all people to “Give it a Rest!” for our benefit and to enable us to deepen our Relationships with God, one another, and with all people! If you take time from your busy life to **be with and focus on your Divine Parent and Creator and to rest, evaluate, relate, plan, and act** based on the greater insights you will have from your Relationships with God and others, then you will enhance your **quality of life, the quality of your planet, and the quality time you have with, and love for, one another**. **“Give it a Rest!”**

Bringing the Two Groups of the “Give it a Rest” examples, along with our Scripture Readings from Exodus and Mark and the Scripture account of Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday together, what do we conclude? It is extremely important for all of us to **“Give it a Rest!” – to Trust God – to focus on our Relationship with God – to give our Divine Parent all of our God Box concerns and to follow our Creator’s Purpose for our lives**. The follow illustration from Scott Black Johnston wraps it all up. He wrote, **“When we wave our palms and boldly cry out, ‘Hosanna,’ do we dare imagine what we really want God to save us from?”** “Save me from anger. Save me from cancer. Save me from depression. Save me from debt. Save me from the strife in my family. Save me from boredom. Save me from getting sent back to Iraq. Save me from the endless cycle of violence. Save me from humiliation. Save me from staring at the ceiling at three a.m. wondering why I exist. Save me from bitterness. Save me from arrogance. Save me from loneliness. Save me, God, save me from my fears.”

Johnston concluded, **“In viewing Palm Sunday from that angle, we can begin to see the potential for some real depth in this celebration, for embedded in our quaint pageantry is an appeal to God that originates in the most vulnerable places inside of us; and it bubbles, almost beyond our control, to the surface.”** “‘Hosanna.’ ‘Save us.’ Please God take the broken places that will tear us apart and make them whole. We beseech you, God, jump into the water and drag our almost-drowned selves to shore. ‘Save us.’ ‘Hosanna.’” (“Save Us” illustration posted on www.sermons.com by Scott Black Johnston)

In other words, **“Give it a Rest!”** Take the Time to Rest and focus on your Relationship with God. **Let your relationships and the way you relate with all people come from your Relationship with God – seek Justice and Agape Love all people! Amen.**