

There is a very disturbing trend here in America. Twenty-five years ago, in 1998, more than sixty percent of all the people in this nation said that religion, their faith, was important to them. Today that number is below forty percent. Jesus is not nearly as popular as He used to be.

So, the Pharisees are getting all worked up over nothing. “*Look!*” they cry in our text, “*the world has gone after (Jesus)!*” They are all upset because a crowd is shouting His praises as He comes riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. “*Hosanna!*” they cry, “*Save us now!*” “*How horrible!*” cry the Pharisees, “*This is getting out of control. Jesus is gaining, and we are losing. The world is going after Him!*”

But, not to worry. Just give the world time. It may go after Jesus now, but it will lose its passion for Him. Not only will the world stop going after Jesus, so will those who supposedly belong to Him. Even Christians will lose their passion for Jesus. Church attendance will plummet. The study of the Holy Scriptures will bottom out. Jesus’ popularity will wane even among those who say they believe in Him. So, not to worry you Pharisees. The world will wake up, or should I say “woke up,” and stop going after Jesus.

There is so much else for the world to go after. March Madness, the beginning of Major League Baseball, the acquiring of wealth, a paycheck, and so much else. Things that are not wrong in and of themselves. Yet things that have become far more popular than Jesus; much more appealing than a man riding on a donkey or hanging from a cross.

And then, too, what we are seeing in our day is the rise in popularity of things that are very wrong in and of themselves. More than one-third of all the sites being visited on the internet are pornographic sites. It is becoming more and more popular to, not just disagree with, but mock those whom God has placed in authority over us. The popularity of homosexuality, or at least the approval of it, is on the rise. The acceptance of changing our God-given biological sex, along with the parading of drag queens, even doing their perverted shows in front of children. And, of course, aborting children before they can even take their first breath, or be embraced by their parents, is as popular as ever.

It should be no surprise that such things are gaining because, obviously, Jesus is losing. But is He? Is Jesus losing the world? Is He losing you? Well, you are here this morning. You are one, are you not, who is still going after Jesus I assume?

Now the Pharisees in our text are all upset about the Palm Sunday crowd going after Jesus. And their solution is devious. They go after Him. Not to follow Him. To grab Him, arrest Him, silence Him, crucify Him. This, they think, is how they will stop the world from going after Jesus. Nail Him to a cross.

But they are playing right into God’s hand. Because on the cross Jesus gains, not only the Palm Sunday crowd, but the entire world. For on the cross the sins of the whole world are laid upon

Him. Rather than losing the world by His bloody death on the cross, Jesus gains the world, reconciling all sinners to God by Himself becoming sin for us all.

But still, we have to admit that the Passion of Christ, His sufferings and death, is not the passion of most people. Who really cares that today is the beginning of Holy Week? Who still sacrifices themselves to make the Lenten journey, the journey to Calvary's cross? It should be those who believe that He died for them. But if Christians are not going after Jesus much anymore, then why should the world go after Him?

Now here is something that we really need to ponder in our minds. No one becomes a Christian by going after Jesus. The only way that anyone becomes a Christian is by Jesus going after them. Lost sheep do not go after their shepherd. The Good Shepherd goes after His lost sheep.

This is comforting to us who are such failures at going after Jesus. Because Jesus is no failure at going after you. He counted it pure joy to go to the cross for you. He sought you and found you in your baptism, making you His own in those sacred waters, forgiving your sins, and promising you that He will never stop going after you.

I can't even begin to count the number of times He has gone after me to bring me back to Himself. How about you? Or are you such a perfect child of God that you never fall away?

Well, I know better, and so do you. You and I are wretched sinners, undeserving of Jesus' love. And yet He loves you. And He goes after you. And not in spite of your sins but because of them. It's because He loves to forgive you.

Never think that you are not worth going after; that you are too far gone; that the evil things you have gone after in your past prevent Jesus from going after you. No one is too far gone. No one is without hope. If you can hear/read these words, then there is comfort and hope for you, because through these words Jesus, right now, is going after you. He does forgive you, and He won't stop forgiving you.

And so, turn your eyes to Calvary. This is Holy Week. Jesus went to the cross for you. Come there with Him and see all your sins laid upon Him. See His bloody wounds for you. Watch Him die and come on Sunday to His open tomb. Come after Jesus because it is Jesus who is going after you. Amen.