

Who is he?

A homily by the Reverend Robert Bruce Edson in Emmanuel Episcopal Church, West Roxbury, Massachusetts on Palm Sunday, March 20, 2016.

It all happened in one, short week.

On Sunday the crowd welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem; by Friday they wanted to get rid of him.

Why did they turn against him so quickly? Did they really even know him?

They turn against him because they are disappointed. He is not what they thought.

They ask, "Who is this? He isn't what we expected."

When Jesus is put on trial, Pontius Pilate asks, "What evil has he done?"

He wants to set him free, but the crowd says "no." They want to destroy him. Why?

They are given a choice to set one prisoner free. One is Barabbas; the other is Jesus.

Barabbas is a criminal; Jesus is innocent.

The crowd insists that Barabbas be set free and that Jesus be condemned to death.

When Pilate asks why, they just shout, "Crucify him!" And their voices prevail.

Wanting to please the crowd, Pilate gives in to the demands of the crowd.

When Jesus is hung on the cross all but one of his friends flee in fear.

Only John remains at the cross with the mother of Jesus.

The others claimed they were his friends, but they abandoned him in fear for themselves.

We've all had friends who told us that we could count on them.

When we needed them, where were they? They said, "Oh, sorry, I can't make it."

"Sorry, I'm busy." "Sorry."

True friends stand by you and are loyal when the going gets tough.

Real friends don't flee at the first sign of trouble.

Each time we do the wrong thing, each time we let down a friend,

Barabbas is released and Jesus is condemned to die.

At the mockery of a trial, Jesus stands before Pilate with his hands tied.

Yet, he is really the only one who is free. The others are all tied up in fear.

As Jesus hangs on the cross, he forgives those who put him there.

Think about those who have hurt you. Forgive them.

Remember those whom you have hurt. Ask their forgiveness.

Never miss an opportunity to do a kindness for someone.

Be the friend who can be counted on, especially when they are in trouble.

Be vigilant for injustice and speak up. Stand with those who live on the margins.

Arrogant rhetoric and conspicuous wealth are not virtuous.

As Christians, we respect the dignity of every human being and work for the common good.

We seek to bring out the best in each other.

We can do this. We can recognize Jesus in our midst. It's not that hard.

We should never have to ask, "Who is he?" Or, "What has he to do with me?"