

A king's wishes are almost always carried out. A king's approval means wonderful things for you. A king's disapproval could mean major trouble for you. Are you a meddling peasant whose found his way into the king's court? Take him away! Back to where you came from! Are you a captured king of another country? Take him away! Off with his head! Are you an unfunny jester? Take him away! Put him in the dungeon until he has good jokes!

As the trial of Jesus progressed, they made him out to be a king. See the purple robe they placed over his shoulders. Look at the crown of thorns they put on his head. But their treatment of him did not match that of a king. The shouts of the crowd were not in support of Jesus' words and actions. Their shouts could not be described as adoring or amicable. They wanted nothing to do with this king. They pushed aside this king Jesus for a common criminal, Barabbas. Well, maybe not so common - he was a murderer! The crowd wanted that man to be out among them, once more a part of their society. The crowd did not want Jesus to be a part of them and in their lives so they shouted, "Take him away!".

At the beginning of our verses for consideration, John takes note of the time. He mentions specifically that it was the day of preparation for the Passover. A day easily recognizable by the Jewish people. They held to their customs. They followed along with the calendar year and their holidays. They had respect for tradition and observed festivals. But there's something a bit ironic here. When Pilate presented Jesus to them he said, "Here is your king." They said in response, "Take him away! Crucify him!" This was coming from the Jewish people... the same ones who should have been waiting on Jesus, eagerly anticipating the arrival of Jesus... these people should have welcomed him with open arms and continue by celebrating his presence among them... but that's not the case. No, these people rejected Jesus in the most volatile of ways.

There's a moment to pause and reflect. Wow, what a contrast in expectation! What a surprising flare of rage and fury taken out against an innocent man! The Jewish crowd almost seems blinded, as if they were looking at a completely different person than the one who was standing before them, one who was quiet and unmoved. Wouldn't they stand to gain more with Jesus? If they were to believe his words and believe in him, wouldn't that work out quite nicely? Could we have avoided this gory image of Jesus, beaten and bruised, bloodied from their careless behavior and the impression of the crown of thorns? If the Jews had believed, this scene would be different, right?

Let's take a moment to pause and reflect. How do believers act? Society knows that answer well whether we do or not. The faithful, the believers, they're a kind and compassionate bunch. Not quick to anger, overflowing in love. Believers would not push away Jesus. They would want to have him around! They want to love him always! No room for hypocrites, people who say one thing - they love Jesus and they love people - but then turn around and act the opposite - scorning Jesus and his commands, breaking down people by their harsh words or neglecting to provide for the needs of their brothers and sisters. Believers are easy to spot; it doesn't take much to recognize the faithful.

That's the picture of believers which is painted and yet, all of us gathered here have said those same haunting words, "Take him away!" in reference to Jesus. At the encouragement of a friend who points you to the cross and the empty tomb in when you are dejected and feeling blue, but it doesn't

feel like enough, it doesn't feel like that's able to give you exactly what you need. "Take him away!" At the moment you decide to follow your gut instinct and give in to the pleasure of this world, one which you know is against what God has told you will benefit you and serve you, but that isn't the instant gratification you're seeking for. "Take him away!" We have shouted right along with the crowd at the trial of Jesus, "Take him away! We don't want him around."

The soldiers carried Jesus out. The command that they were given was in accord with the cries of the crowd. Everyone left Jesus to carry his own cross on which he would die. The shouts of the crowd had led Jesus to this place of the skull, Golgotha, where he would die. Our shouts of defiance, anger, and unbelief led Jesus to this place where he would die. Yes, our many sins nailed Jesus to the cross. An innocent man hung there in place of the hostile Jewish crowd, in place of the high priests deferring to their earthly king instead of their heavenly king, and in place of us, his rebellious children.

You'll notice where Jesus was when they lifted him up onto the cross. He was in the middle with two criminals besides him. Attention was automatically drawn to Jesus being in that prominent position. He also had a sign reading "King of the Jews" above him and that crown of thorns placed on his head. God directs our attention to Jesus there on the cross still today. For every single time when we have said, "Take him away!" God did take him away. He took him away to the cross. There he placed his righteous anger and the wrath which our sins deserve on Jesus, while taking the righteousness and holiness of Jesus and giving that to us. God sent Jesus for us and for our salvation so that he would not look at us on the Last Day, that Day of Judgment, and say, "Take him away! Take her away!", but because of Jesus' life, "Bring him near" because of Jesus' death, "Draw her close to me." Because of Jesus' triumphant resurrection from the dead, "This is my child." That is God's shout to you, heard loudly and clearly in the grace of the gospel that tells you of Jesus' suffering so that you would live and be enabled to love him now and forevermore.