

Failure or Success?

For the vast majority of people to be in love is a great thing. Yet for a tennis player it is a great failure!

How do you define 'failure'?

How do you define 'success'?

Easter is a period of time that challenges our definitions of 'failure' and 'success'. There is the triumphant entry into Jerusalem on what we now call Palm Sunday. A king comes in peace - riding on a donkey - and the vast crowds raise their voices in acclaim and honour. 'Success'?

That week there are a number of exchanges between that king and the established religious authorities. The latter challenge the king's authority for what he does and says. He always seems to refute their allegations, avoid their traps and is 'successful'! BUT the religious authorities start plotting how to get rid of this king: on a permanent basis! Will they be 'successful'? Will the king's 'successes' turn out to be the cause of his ultimate 'failure'?

The king and his disciples share a 'successful' Passover meal. During this meal the king even introduces a few changes to the meal and its meaning. 'Success'? Yet these changes seem to speak of the ultimate 'failure' of this king!

Then there is the 'successful' betrayal of the king. Yet the betrayer hangs himself! 'Success'? 'Failure'? Now the religious authorities have their man! 'Success'? Through persuading the Roman Governor to yield to their requests the religious authorities 'succeed' in getting this king condemned to death. As for the king he suffers the horrendous 'failure' of being efficiently flogged and crucified by the Roman authorities stationed in Jerusalem.

As the king hangs on that cross outside the city wall at Calvary the 'successful' religious authorities mock him! 'Success' to the religious authorities! 'Failure' to the king! BUT what's that he is saying? "**It is finished.**" What is finished? His life? His suffering? His . . . mission?

The king dies! The religious authorities celebrate their 'success'. BUT what was that? The massive curtain in the temple separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple has been torn from top to bottom. Who could get up that high to tear the curtain? Where's the sun gone? Is that an earthquake? What is happening? Is this 'success'?

The king is taken down, there has been no rioting, he is 'successfully' laid in a tomb, it is sealed, Roman soldiers are guarding it to prevent the king's follower stealing the body.

Phew!! That was a hard fought victory! But now let's toast our 'success'!

If the authorities had only realised what they had done, they would have choked on their toast! You see, after all that effort and commitment they had lost! They had 'failed'! The king had 'succeeded'! He came to '**save his people from their sins**'. [Mtt. 1:21] That meant paying the penalty for their sins. That penalty was death. That meant crucifixion! He came to give his people the gift of God. That mission was completed by his death on the cross: "**It is finished.**" [Jn. 19:30]

'The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.' [Rom. 6:23]

'Failure'? 'Success'?

Ultimate and total 'success' goes to Jesus!

Oh by the way, on the third day, just to emphasis the point, God the Father raised God the Son back to life, by the power of God the Spirit!

You see God in Jesus the Christ came first and foremost **to die** not to rise. His victory was his death. His 'success' was his seeming 'failure'.

The resurrection, glorious and reassuring as it is, was really just his lap of honour!!

May God bless you richly this Easter by filling you afresh, or perhaps for the first time, with the 'success' of his love!

To God be the glory!

Have a happy and blessed Easter
Yours in Christ,
Douglas