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You will remember after the Chilcot enquiry about three years ago one former prime minister was on the receiving end of a lot of criticism because of doubtful decisions he made in the lead-up to the Iraqi war and the fall out afterwards. If the Iraq situation had gone reasonably smoothly, He would have been vindicated. But it didn't exactly turn out like that. Goes to show how fickle worldly ambition is.

The reading from Jeremiah makes the same point where it says: 'a curse on the man who relies on things of flesh'. In the Gospel Jesus says: '*alas for you when the world speaks well of you*'.

Well, when we play the world's game and kow-tow to those who can boost our ego, without questioning their ulterior intentions, then we are, as the reading says, '*relying on things of flesh*'.

Jesus points a different way. He did not rely on 'things of flesh' because he knew how fickle people were. You remember after he fed the five thousand they wanted to make him King but he beat a hasty retreat into the hills. Shortly afterwards when He insisted that his followers 'eat is flesh and drink his blood', hoards deserted Him. Again, He says: 'Happy are you when people drive you out'. A couple of Sunday's ago we saw where He was driven out of his home village of Nazareth when the locals ganged up on Him. Again, He says: 'happy are you when people abuse you'. His trial before the Sanhedrin and Pilate was a catalogue of both physical, verbal and indeed mental abuse. He also says: "happy are you when people denounce you as a criminal". Jesus was treated as a criminal when He was unjustly condemned by Pilate to die on a Cross.

Jesus was a God pleaser, not a people pleaser. In John's Gospel He says: '*I always do what pleases Him*'. And again he says: '*as for human approval, it means nothing to me*'.

Wanting the world 'to always speak well of us' could betray a fickleness of character. If we're overly reliant in this area, it's time to ask ourselves a few pertinent questions. Are we so hooked on being politically correct, kow-towing to our betters that we negate the Gospel? You and I will be more respected, in the long run, for standing up for what is right than being a crowd pleaser. Surely the only person worth pleasing is God.

Jesus says: *'Happy are you when people hate you and drive you out, rejoice because your reward will be great in heaven'*. These words make little or no sense from a purely human point of view. Worldly wisdom doesn't wash with our Lord.

Keeping on the straight and narrow may not win us many friends in this world but the important thing is that we don't let Our Lord down. He is counting on our friendship, our co-operation, our support to further His Kingdom of love in this world. That may be an uphill struggle but the Lord will not desert us. Standing by Him will *"give us a deep inner peace which the world cannot give"*.