

John 12:12-26

¹² The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.

Verse one of the chapter tells us it was six days before Passover. This would then be five days before the Passover, Palm Sunday. It was a significant day to the Jews as the day when each family's sacrificial lamb had to be chosen (Exodus 12:3). The Law required every family to care for their lamb for five days (Exodus 12:6). This was to be certain the lamb was unblemished, but also to grow attached to the lamb. A sacrifice was not a painless act for the giver. It reinforced the idea that sin is serious and has painful consequences. As the Jewish people chose their lambs, the Lamb of God presented Himself as a choice.

I would grow attached enough to a lamb over five days, but to pick someone who could look into my soul and speak to my deepest fears... how could I choose Him? How could I expect Him to pay with His life for my sins? When we realize we must choose Jesus and we recognize the price He paid, it cannot help but tear our heart in pieces over the consequences of our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3).

¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"

13 Palm branches were a nationalistic symbol. It was a prominent feature at the rededication of the temple when the Maccabees ousted the Syrians. It would later be the symbol on the coins minted by those leading the Jewish revolt against the Romans.

The people were shouting a quote from Psalm 118:25. Hosanna is the transliteration of a Hebrew word that means "save now". It had become a general expression of acclamation or praise. The quote is literally, "YHWH (they would have said Adonai) save us." It is ironic that that is exactly why Jesus had come, to save their souls and ours as well. Of course, the crowd had saving their wallets and prestige as a nation in mind. Why do you want Him to save you? Do you want His love?

If only they had looked a few verses earlier in that Psalm they were quoting, they would have seen that this One who saves is the gate, the rejected stone that became the capstone, and salvation (Psalm 118:20-22). Luke tells us He stopped and wept over the city, ⁴² saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. Luke 19:42 (ESV) Jesus then went on to predict the destruction of the city and its inhabitants (Luke 19:42-45). Imagine that! Everyone is singing your praises and He tells them they just do not get it and that they will be destroyed. Jesus did not care about adulation when it was for the wrong reason. He was deeply concerned about their eternal souls not temporal fame for Himself. What a Savior!

¹⁴ And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, ¹⁵ "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!" ¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.

14-16 Another event was going on that same day on the opposite side of town. Pilate was riding into town on a stallion with an escort of soldiers. All those in league with Rome and hoping to gain a little favor and position with those in power would go out to meet the procurator and welcome him to Jerusalem.

Over the Mountain of Olives came Jesus on a donkey. What a contrast! On western side of the city, the man with the earthly power and authority rides in on his war stallion escorted with the power and might of Rome. On the eastern side of the city, Jesus, with the heavenly power and authority rides in on a donkey and her foal escorted by fishermen, a tax collector, and a few other misfits (Matthew 21:7). Both crowds are praising their hero for selfish reasons. Pilate will soon ride into oblivion, a powerless reject trying to cling to sanity, while Jesus will ride to the right hand of the throne of God to forever reign in the hearts of those He has saved from damnation (Luke 22:69).

The donkey ride was planned hundreds, even thousands of years earlier when Jacob told Judah, Jesus' ancestor, that he would tie his donkey's colt to the choicest vine (Genesis 49:10,11). Four centuries earlier Zechariah predicted the true king of Israel would come to his people on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). It was a humble entrance for the King of kings, but one that was filled with meaning from the pages of the prophets, one that was destined to change everything.

17 The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. 18 The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."

17-19 The word about Lazarus' resurrection had spread and people saw this as the ultimate messianic sign. This really provoked the jealousy of the leadership in Jerusalem and strengthened their conviction that they needed to kill Jesus and Lazarus to prevent Rome from seeing it as an uprising. Sadly, a messianic pretender would come forty years later and they would side with him which caused what they feared to take place.

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks.

20 These were God fearing Gentiles who did not conform to Jewish lifestyle but were attracted to the monotheistic religion. They were allowed in the outer court, the Court of the Gentiles. They could have been from the region of Galilee that had a large number of Gentiles. They probably heard about Jesus' ministry (Matthew 4:15).

21 So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

21,22 Philip and Andrew were the only two disciples with Greek names. It is quite possible that Philip spoke Greek as his hometown was in the Gaulanitis region. Matthew told of Gentiles, the magi, arriving from the East to celebrate the birth of Jesus (Matthew 2:1). Now John recalls that Gentiles were also seeking Jesus near the time of the crucifixion, framing Jesus' time on earth with Gentile visits.

23 And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

23 What a strange answer! It is as strange as His response to the crowds shouting, "Hosanna!" If Gentiles are seeking Jesus, the path for them is not through the Law, but through the cross. Jesus' hour had come (Mark 14:41).

It is my opinion that when Jesus was speaking of being glorified, He was not just speaking of His ascension into heaven and His place at the right hand of the Father (Daniel 7:14), but also of the crucifixion. If glory is expressing the heart of God, the

outshining of the attributes of God, then the cross is glorious (Isaiah 52:13). It is there that we see the love of God most clearly displayed. Jesus connected the cross and the love of God when He was speaking to Nicodemus. ¹⁴ *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ...For God so loved the world...* John 3:14,16a and also in John 15:13, ¹³ *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.*

²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

24 As Jesus laid down His life for us, He knew that what you sow you reap (Hosea 10:12). He sowed His life and love and in doing so would reap life and love. Just like a seed is buried before the life within it can multiply, so Jesus had to be buried before He could multiply His life in us (Colossians 1:27). Remember, Jesus was not drawing on an analogy from nature. He made nature to help us understand the eternal Godhead (Romans 1:20).

Rabbinic literature has numerous examples of a kernel of wheat illustrating resurrection. Resurrection and the Messiah's reign were always seen as something that came together. Jesus was not only telling them that He was not going to be a military leader and take over Israel, but that His path to glory was through death. The way His kingdom would be spread was not with the power of the sword but through the power of laying down your life in utter submission to God. In sowing His life, Jesus made it possible for us to have life. As we sow our lives, the reproduction becomes exponential.

²⁵ Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

25 The word "hate" is a powerful contrasting sentiment. Not many Christians would say they hated their life in this world. Jews used love/hate contrasting statements as idioms, pointing to preference rather than actual hatred (Genesis 29:31). (Compare Luke 14:26 to Matthew 10:37.) Can you imagine Jesus saying, "I hate my life?" Of course not! But it would be in perfect character to hear him say that to live is to know God (John 17:3). That shows an absolute preference in life, an ultimate priority, a priority His followers should have.

We really cannot come to Jesus with a "what is in it for me" mindset. Many want to become spiritual masters, big shots. That is not the way of Jesus! That is the pot telling the potter it is considering being of noble service. I can just hear God's responding, "Oh how magnanimous of you little piece of pottery, but I already had a use in mind when I made you" (Romans 9:21)!

We must denounce the way of our culture if we are to follow Jesus. We are the ones coming to our Maker with a Greco-Roman mindset of self-fulfillment and He is telling us that the Hebrew mindset of serving God is the right culture. The goal of self-fulfillment can be devilish pride.

The pure Hebrew mindset was that the servant was the greatest. Who are the great heroes of Israel? First is Abraham. His life is a life of obedient faith, living as pilgrim in this earth (Hebrews 11:17; 9). Next is Moses. He called himself a "servant of the LORD" (Deuteronomy 34:5). Service to the Lord first and secondly His people is the Biblical mindset and real fulfillment. It is fulfillment not in getting what we desire but in being who God created us to be.

26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

26 Jesus is describing the typical teacher disciple relationship. A disciple serves his teacher. He follows his teacher to see how he lives for he learns as much from his actions as he does his words. But then Jesus goes a step further. He promises that God, "My Father," will honor the one who serves me. That was a bold statement and is in effect saying that to serve Jesus is to serve God!

Do you want to serve Jesus? That is a God given desire. Well, you must follow Him. Where does He go? He goes to the cross. He dies to His own will and ways to follow the leading of the Spirit of God (John 5:19). It is the "what would Jesus do" way of living life.

Questions

What was significant about five days before Passover?

What was the irony in the shouts of Hosanna?

How were the crowds on both sides of the city similar?

What does "now is the time for the Son of Man to be glorified" mean?

What do we see in the cross?

What does it mean to "hate" one's life?

What did it say to the Western mindset?

What is the path to real enjoyment and victory in life?

Have you chosen Jesus as your sacrificial lamb?