

Our passage begins with the words "the next day". ¹² *The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way 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. Who would choose Jesus, the friend of sinners? (Matthew 11:19) 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 get to know Jesus and we realize the price He paid, it can't help but tear our heart in pieces over the consequences of our sins. (1Corinthians 15:3)

The text tells us it was a great crowd. The population of Jerusalem was about 100,000, and during Passover it swelled to many times that number. Some estimate it to have been as many as a million people. The story of the raising of Lazarus quickly spread through the crowd. ¹³ *They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the King of Israel!"*

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 more in mind. Deliverance from the Romans would mean an end of oppressive taxation and the dignity of being completely self-governing. If only they had looked a few verses earlier in that Psalm they were quoting, they would have seen that this One that saves is the gate, the rejected stone that became the capstone, and salvation. (Psalm 118:20-22)

Jesus' heart was broken as He heard the requests for the wrong kind of salvation. Luke tells us He stopped and wept over the city, ⁴² *and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is*

Commented [notes1]: 3 Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. Ex 12:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 6 Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Ex 12:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners."' But wisdom is proved right by her actions." Matt 11:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance : that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 1 Cor 15:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 25 O LORD, save us; O LORD, grant us success. Psalms 118:25 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: Psalm 118:20-22 (NIV)
20 This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter.
21 I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.
22 The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone;

hidden from your eyes. Luke 19:42 (NIV) 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 don't get it and that they will be destroyed. Jesus didn't care about adulation when it was from a wrong heart. He was truly concerned about their eternal souls not temporal fame for Himself. What a Savior!

¹⁴ Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, ¹⁵ "Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt."

¹⁶ At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him. 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 curry 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 Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. ¹⁸ Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him. The word began to spread and the crowds swelled. That spelled danger to those in authority. The crowds were on the wrong side of town.

¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!" "The whole world" phrase was a common exaggeration of that day. John is building the dramatic tension by telling us of the increasing determination of those in authority to have Jesus executed.

Commented [notes7]: 42 and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes.
43 The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side.
44 They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."
Luke 19:42-44 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 7 They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them.
Matt 21:7 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 69 But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God."
Luke 22:69 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: Genesis 49:10-11 (NIV)
10 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.
11 He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes.

Commented [notes11]: 9 Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
Zech 9:9 (NIV)

²⁰ Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. These would be 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)

Commented [notes12]: 15 "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles-- Matt 4:15 (NIV)

²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." ²² Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. 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 arriving from the East, the magi, 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.

Commented [notes13]: 1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem Matt 2:1 (NIV)

²³ Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. What a strange answer! It's 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)

Commented [notes14]: 41 Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Mark 14:41 (NIV)

It is my opinion that when Jesus was speaking of being glorified, He wasn't speaking just of His ascension into heaven and His place at the right hand of the Father (Daniel 7:14), but of the crucifixion as well. 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. *Just as Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up. For God so loved the world...* John 3:14-16a and also in John 15:13, "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend."

Commented [notes15]: Daniel 7:14 (NIV) 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Commented [notes16]: 13 See, my servant will act wisely ; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Isaiah 52:13 (NIV)

In the cross, we see God's righteous judgment on sin. The blood of lambs that they lived with for five days gave them some idea of how deplorable sin is, but the Son of God suffering for those hours of agony makes it even clearer what sin actually deserves. It shows us the wrath that we were spared. (Romans 5:9) It shows us the holiness of Christ to stand up under it all and submit to the Father to His last breath. (Luke 23:46) The cross is the glorification of the Son because in the cross we so clearly see the heart of the Father who hates the sin but loves the sinner.

Commented [notes17]: 14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. 16 "For God so loved the world John 3:14-16 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! Romans 5:9 (NIV)

Glory is also seen in Jesus victory over death and the grave. ²⁴ I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. We tend to think of glory as the pomp and power of Pilate riding in on his stallion on the other side of town. Jesus saw it as laying down His life so that we might live. Our heavenly Father is

Commented [notes19]: 46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last. Luke 23:46 (NIV)

the great giver. He is the giver of all good things. (James 1:17) We don't have anything that we did not receive from Him.

Commented [notes20]: 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.
James 1:17 (NIV)

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 and 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 wasn't drawing on an analogy from nature. He made nature to help us understand the eternal Godhead.

Commented [notes21]: 12 Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unending love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you.
Hosea 10:12 (NIV)

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 wasn't 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.

Commented [notes22]: 27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
Col 1:27 (NIV)

25 The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Pilate loved his life. Judas loved his life. They were clinging to what the physical world offered them. That was their priority. What is your priority? You just need to look at the motivation behind your actions to give yourself an honest answer.

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.

Commented [notes23]: Genesis 29:31 (KJV)
31 And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren.

Commented [notes24]: 26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple.
Luke 14:26 (NIV)

The Greco-Roman goal of life was self-fulfillment. I think we would be safe to say the Greco-Roman mindset is the most common in the world today. Jesus' answer to Greeks seeking Him was also a denunciation of their culture's goal. They would first have to forsake the ways of their culture to follow Jesus. We really can't come to Jesus with a "what's 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 some kind of 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)

Commented [notes25]: 37 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;
Matt 10:37 (NIV)

Commented [notes26]: 3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.
John 17:3 (NIV)

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

Commented [notes27]: 21 Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?
Romans 9:21 (NIV)

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 His people, secondly, is the Biblical mindset and real fulfillment. It's fulfillment not in getting what we desire but in being who God created us to be.

²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. 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, Jesus. 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's the "what would Jesus do" way of living life.

I want to give you a caution here. I used to think this meant a disciple of Jesus didn't enjoy life or take vacations. The Scriptures are very clear that God gives us all things richly to enjoy. (1Timothy 6:17) Followers of Jesus enjoy life more than any one else, they just don't make the pleasures of this world a priority. Solomon said there was nothing better than for a man to enjoy the fruit of his labor. (Ecclesiastes 8:15) We just don't try to fill our heart with that enjoyment. Jesus is the best Master one could ever serve. He gives His servants down time, and restores them. He leads them beside still waters. (Psalm 23:3-4) He isn't a hard taskmaster. Sin is the hard taskmaster. It is in losing our life that we truly find it. (Matthew 10:39)

Our passage began with Jesus traveling the down the Hosanna Road. It ends with Him explaining that the adulation of the crowds isn't the victory. Death to self, followed by surrender and service to God is the real victory and place of honor. The only reason it seems counter intuitive is because we are born in sin. We are surrounded by a world with that Greco-Roman mindset of self-fulfillment. Will we believe Jesus' words? Will we follow His example? *²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be.* Are you with Jesus?

Commented [notes28]: 17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son,
Heb 11:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes29]: 9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.
Heb 11:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes30]: 5 And Moses the servant of the LORD died there in Moab, as the LORD had said.
Deut 34:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes31]: 19 Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."
John 5:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes32]: 17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.
1 Tim 6:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes33]: 15 So I commend the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun.
Ecc 8:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes34]: 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, 3 he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Psalms 23:2-3 (NIV)

Commented [notes35]: 39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.
Matt 10:39 (NIV)