

11.5.23 – COMMUNION – Gratitude – Hosanna – John 12:12-26

My wife is a professional photographer and she is really good at her job. You should get some pictures with her before she fully retires in the next few months... she is training one of my daughters, Kaylen, to be a photographer as well, so we will still have a photographer in the family. One of the things my wife has taught me, when I take photos on my phone is to make sure the lens on my phone is clear. All too often, we pick up our phones, and somehow get the lens dirty. Then we take a photo and the lens is murky. And when we look at our photos, we wonder why we don't see them clearly.

I think the same is true in our lives today.

We do not see things clearly.

We see things from our own perspective. We see things through our own biases, and family history. We see the things we want to see, and in most cases, it is because the lens of our soul is not clear. When that happens we miss important things. We can mistake the things we think we see and interpret it as the things we want to see.

As we continue in our study of Jesus in the Gospel of John, my hope is you would attend to the lens of your soul. That you would ask yourself hard questions and push yourselves to see Jesus for who he is, not who you want him to be, or who you think he should be.

As we study the Bible today, I hope to encourage you and teach you things about Jesus and my prayer is that you would see him clearly, and worship him as God.

We are in John chapter 12 today, starting in verse 12, it says...

John 12:12-13ESV

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

After the dinner at Bethany, with Lazarus, Jesus and his disciples headed to Jerusalem. If they had dinner on Saturday night, then this would be Sunday of what we now know as Passion Week. Palm Sunday in fact. I know it's not Easter, but He is risen! We know for sure this was the Sunday before the Passover feast. That means there would have been a lot of people in Jerusalem. A lot, a lot.

In fact, about 30-40 years after this event, one historian named Josephus, numbered just the Jewish people, not the foreigners, at just under three million. Even if Josephus is exaggerating the numbers, the point is, there would have been lots of people in and on the way to Jerusalem. Jews, and Pilgrims from all over the world.

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Many of them would have heard of Jesus, the miracles he had done, and even of the recent resurrection of Lazarus. There would have been many fans of Jesus on the road to Jerusalem from many places.

On his way from Bethany, Jesus most likely went up and over the Mount of Olives, and then descended the mountain.

They were ready to worship the King, and the lesson for us is to...

Know the King. (vv. 12-13)

Do you know the King? You need to know Jesus because he is the King. It was on the way to Jerusalem people took palm branches, and they cried out Hosanna! This was a celebration environment! And at this time in history, the palm branch became a national symbol of victory.

This comes from the victory when a Jewish leader named Simeon Maccabee drove the Syrian forces out of Jerusalem. When he did that, they played music and waved palm branches. Though Jesus was not the military King they wanted, we can see, they definitely recognized his power, and celebrated him.

The people cried Hosanna which came from a Hebrew phrase “hoshianna” which literally meant “give salvation now!” We see it more clearly in Psalm 118:25...

Psalm 118:25-26 ESV

25 Save us, we pray, O Lord!

O Lord, we pray, give us success!

26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

We bless you from the house of the Lord.

Every Jew knew this phrase. It was part of their morning songs as part of the Feast of Tabernacles. And they would have waved their palm branches when they got to the part that said “save us, we pray, O Lord! O Lord, we pray, give us success!” which is transliterated here as “Hosanna!”

What I hope to communicate to you today, is this. Know the King. Get to know the King. We have been studying the life of Jesus, his words, his miracles, and I pray you are getting to know Jesus as the King. I encourage you to seek his Kingdom, in all things. If Jesus and the salvation he brings is good news, put your trust in this gospel. That Jesus forgives, and he saves. He makes all things new. Know the King.

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Jesus is the King, and here he was headed to Jerusalem. It would have been about a two mile journey, so not that far. The Bible teaches us that on his way, Jesus got a ride, see with me in verse 14...

John 12:14-15 ESV

**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!"**

This is part of a larger story, a prophecy in fact that Jesus is fulfilling. We do not know where along the way Jesus sat on the young donkey. We do know that there must have been a lot of people there watching this unfold, and they would have been waiting for this fulfillment of prophecy.

You can imagine the setting. You are headed to worship at the temple, and in your travels and surrounding Jerusalem, was the presence of Roman soldiers. The soldiers were there because Israel at this time was under Roman rule. The people were heavily taxed, and in some cases killed. They would have been looking for the Messiah.

And then Jesus gets on a young donkey, and in that moment you remember the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9...

Zechariah 9:9 ESV

**⁹ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
righteous and having salvation is he,
humble and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**

You can imagine the crowd's response. You can imagine having your heart warmed and your spirit lifted up. The point I want to emphasize from the Lord today is...

God fulfills his promises. (vv. 14-15)

God promised the people of Israel, salvation. If you read all of Zechariah 9, you will see there are clear promises God has made to Israel. Very clear in fact.

All of this becomes very relevant in light of the current conflict in Israel now. God promises that because of his blood covenant with his people he would take away the chariots from Ephraim, and the war horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow would be broken. The prophesied

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Messiah would rule from sea to sea, and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth. Very powerful language, and a promise to be sure.

However, this promise preceded, meaning, it would go before the gentle king.

Zechariah 9:10 ESV

**¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall speak peace to the nations;
his rule shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.**

The coming of the gentle king is connected to the proclamation of peace to the nations which would extend his rule to the ends of the earth.

I do not know how God will bring all of this to pass, but I do know that Jesus is the prince of peace, he is the King of Kings, and he is the Lord of lords. In our world of constant information and people propping themselves up as having the answers for all biblical prophecy, I want to say to you this. Know the King and trust that God fulfills his promises.

The Lord will have his way, and he will do it in his timing, and with the method that he prescribes. Until further notice we have a mandate from Jesus to...

Matthew 28:19-20 ESV

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Remember, Jesus could have come into Jerusalem like a conquering hero... but that was not the will of the father. The will of the Father was that Jesus would be the gentle King who would lay down his life for the salvation of sin, for all who put their trust in him. That's my king.

I mean... Jesus is riding to Jerusalem on a donkey! He could have ridden in on a tall horse, but that was not the plan. The plan was to enter Jerusalem as the peaceful, gentle king. Some people understood that, and some did not. Even Jesus' disciples had difficulty with this, see with me in John 12:16...

John 12:16-19ESV

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. 17 The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised

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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.”

The disciples struggled to understand Jesus at times. We know that when we read about their confusion at the feeding of the five thousand. Jesus tells them to feed everyone, and they say “we don’t have enough food”. You can imagine them being in this scene with people celebrating Jesus as he is entering Jerusalem after raising Lazarus from the dead.

You have to remember that Jesus was a wanted man. He was so wanted that even Lazarus got on the list of people to kill. All of this would have been very risky to the disciples. They had to be asking themselves “what is going on?” “Why are people celebrating?” “Isn’t Jesus afraid?”

It did not make sense to the disciples at the time, but the bible says that they remembered it after he went to the cross. The people are clamoring for Jesus, they are excited about him, they are following him, and even the Pharisees are feeling overwhelmed with how the world is responding to Jesus.

It must have been confusing in the moment. And yet, from this, I want to encourage you to...

Keep your focus on Jesus. (vv. 16-19)

The disciples had heard Jesus teach, they watched the miracles, the Pharisees heard the stories about Jesus, they heard him teach, they challenged him, they heard about the miracles.... So how did they miss it?

They missed it because their focus was not on Jesus. In the moment, the disciples failed to understand because they did not have a clear view of what was about to happen. They did not know Jesus would be crucified, or that he would raise from the dead, or that they would receive the holy spirit. They had heard about it all, but they lacked clear focus.

For us today, we have a clear view of the life of Jesus. The whole world does. We need to keep our focus on Jesus and keep it clear.

When I talk about clear focus, I mean, from the standpoint of having a clear lens. If the eyes of your soul, the eyes of your heart, are not clear. You will be like the disciples and things will become confusing. You won’t understand.

The gospel for us is clear. It is clear for the whole world. But our testimony is sometimes murky. The things of this life make our focus difficult. It becomes hard to see clearly when we are struggling with the number of things that we face in life.

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I feel like our growth path at Orchard helps with this a lot. Come to church, or watch online, live connected with other people, get to know people, learn in community, be generous with your time, talent, and treasure, learn to rely on God, be transformed by the truth, and change your world. All of these things will help you keep your focus on Jesus.

On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus rides a donkey, and people are celebrating him, and the disciples are confused, and the Pharisees are overwhelmed, and in the midst of the crowd there are some people that are not Jewish that show up, see with me in verse 20...

John 12:20-22 ESV

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

The Greeks that went to worship at the temple now seek Jesus, which alludes to Jesus being the peaceful, gentle King who would rule the world, proving...

He is the King of the world. (vv. 20-22)

Jerusalem has become the world stage. The Pharisees are exhausted by Jesus' influence among the Jews, and yet, Jesus' influence is now extending to the whole world. We do not know a lot about these Greeks. However, we do know that these Greeks were going to the temple to worship.

They could have been God-fearing Greeks. Or they could have been mystic-Greeks. They could have been Greeks who were in the process of converting to Judaism.

It is important to note here that people from all over the world went to worship and observe the worship that was happening at the Temple in Jerusalem.

The temple was one of the wonders of the world at this time in history. People traveled from all over the world to see it and experience the worship environment. It drew lots of people who were interested in finding God.

These were pilgrims, and they risked wealth, and safety, traveling into a difficult place in the world. We do not know much about who the Greeks were, but it reminds us that Jesus is King, and they wanted to meet him.

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When we live lives that are wholly committed to God, people will see our faith and they will be interested in it. Our testimony, our lives, the way we seek to talk about God and be committed to our worship of our God is incredibly important. I cannot stress this enough. In fact, in 2022 Islam became the fastest growing religion in the world. Did you know that? Their religion grows because they have lots of children, and they are firmly committed to teaching their children their faith, and in their family cultures, they are very intentional to teach their children to honor their parents, and that the kids must honor the family by keeping their faith.

This is why we need to be more intentional than we ever have been about knowing our faith, being committed to our faith, showing our faith with love, knowing and following the Jesus way, and teaching our children the things we have learned.

Bible Transition:

This is a big deal. Maybe more than we want to face. We have to teach our children the bible, and we have to be committed to one another. That means giving up all the things that tear us apart. Our faith is more important than anything else. Anything else. Not just for its advancement, but for the sake of our witness.

People need to see that we believe in Jesus because of the way we live our lives.

The Gospel encompasses the Jew and the Gentile, or in this case, the Greek, or in your case, whoever in your life does not know Jesus. Those people need to see the Gospel in your life and hear the Gospel.

Okay, so the disciples let Jesus know the Greeks want to talk to him, and then the story moves on and Jesus shares one of many last lessons the disciples need to hear and learn. It says in verse 23...

John 12:23-26 ESV

23 And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 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. 25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 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."

This is an incredible palpable moment for the disciples. You can imagine the scene on the way to the Temple, all of the people who want to see Jesus, these Greek people, and then Jesus drops a major hard truth on them.

Just like a seed needs to die, to bring fruit, fruit that would nurture life, so too it would be for the followers of Jesus.

Jesus is now teaching them and us that...

Sacrifice leads to victory. (vv. 23-26)

The teaching Jesus offers about the seed that must die, and that the person who loves their life will lose it, is all about recognizing our lives on this earth, the disciples, and you, and me, must be like Jesus, and therefore lay our lives down, for the will of the father. Everything Jesus did came from the will of the father.

This extends to the disciples, or followers of Jesus. That includes you and me.

The gospel is that Jesus laid down his life, and raised from the dead, to forgive sin. He invites you to put your trust in him and follow him. And that means you and me, laying down our lives for the will of the father. Which means you need to know the will of the father. You need to seek the will of the father. You need to preach the gospel to yourself, and then to your neighbor. You need to show the world the power of God.

We are given the holy spirit which brings us the transformation of the soul. It brings the renewal of our minds, and it helps us be connected to God in a real and powerful way. Don't waste this life. Use it to bring God glory. Not bring yourself glory. Seek to worship God. Put your faith in God. Keep your focus on Jesus, and remember He is the King, and you can trust him.