

Hosanna!

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- [0 : 00] If you have your Bible with you, you can open it up to John chapter 12. John chapter 12. We're picking up where we left off last Sunday.
- And last Sunday we heard about a special dinner that Jesus had with Mary and Martha and Lazarus in the village of Bethany, just three kilometers outside of Jerusalem.
- And we heard about how Mary poured out on Jesus her very expensive perfume, probably her most valuable possession as a gift of love and worship.
- We also heard about how Jesus' whereabouts has again become known to not just the religious leaders, but to many of the people of Jerusalem. And how they, finding out about Jesus being there in Bethany, have now come out to see both Jesus and Lazarus and how many were coming to believe in Jesus.
- Let's pick up the story in John chapter 12, verse 12. John chapter 12, verse 12.
- [1 : 08] The next day, the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. 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.
- Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it as it is written. Do not be afraid, daughter Zion. See, your King is coming, seated on a donkey's colt.
- The triumphal entry. This is a big moment in the story of Jesus. John tells us that it happened soon after his visit in Bethany.
- Either the day after the dinner or the day after the crowd arrived to see Jesus, they came. And then this next day was the triumphal entry.
- John tells us here in verse 12 that a great crowd came out from Jerusalem to meet him. But notice which crowd.
- [2 : 21] This is not the same crowd back in verse 9. This crowd is a different crowd. They're the ones who have come to Jerusalem for the Passover generally.
- And now they've heard that Jesus is now on his way out of Bethany to Jerusalem. And so hearing this, they now make their way out to meet Jesus.
- John tells us in the next verse, they took palm branches and went out to meet him. So picture this in your mind. Word is spreading from house to house that Jesus is just down the road and now he's on his way right now into the city of Jerusalem.
- This is the same Jesus that's been the talk of the whole city. The one that they've all been asking about. Where is he? Is he coming to the festival? And as the word is spreading that Jesus is now on his way, these people are running out of their houses.
- They're finding palm branches, whether from trees in the city or just outside the city. Maybe even climbing them, some of them. Breaking off the branches and then with branches tucked under their arms, they're running down the road towards Bethany to meet Jesus.
- [3 : 49] Well, what's with the palm branches? The only significance of the palm branches that's in the Bible that we hear about has to do with a different festival, the festival of tabernacles.

But this is Passover. The general consensus among Christian scholars and historians is this. About 200 years before this took place, palm branches became a national symbol in Israel.

They were used when they rededicated the temple to the Lord about 200 years before this. And then about 20 years after that, a man named Simon the Maccabee drove the Syrian forces out of the Jerusalem citadel.

And when that happened, there was celebration and music and the crowds grabbed palm branches and waved them. It was a moment of victory, a moment of national liberation.

And that all took place in the time between the Old and the New Testaments. But now here again, Israel and Jerusalem are not free and independent.

[4 : 54] This time it's not the Syrians, but the Romans who are in power. But there is great hope by many that this man, who is now on his way into the city, is the long-awaited Messiah.

The king who will reign over Israel and liberate us from the rule of the Romans, who will lead us to victory. And so the palm branches probably are a kind of a tangible expression of this hope that Jesus will lead us to triumph again as a nation.

For some, that yes, he is the Messiah we've been waiting for. And this feeling comes out in the words of the crowd. They were shouting, Hosanna!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the king of Israel. The cry Hosanna is a Hebrew expression.

And it literally means, save! Or give salvation now. It actually comes from the Psalms. And it was a passage that every Jew would have known because it was used often in festivals.

[6 : 05] Let me read a little bit from Psalm 118. This is from Psalm 118, verse 19. And this appears on the screen in prose, but it's actually poetic.

It's like a song. So, Open for me the gates of the righteous. I will enter and give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord through which the righteous may enter.

I will give you thanks for you answered me. You have become my salvation. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. The Lord has done this and it is marvelous in our eyes.

The Lord has done it this very day. Let us rejoice today and be glad. Lord, save us. That save us is literally Hosanna.

And the Lord is literally Yahweh, the name of God. Yahweh, save us. Yahweh, grant us success. Blessed is he who comes in the name of Yahweh.

[7 : 07] From the house of Yahweh, we bless you. Yahweh is God and he has made his light shine on us with bows in hand. Join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.

These were the words of the song that was sung long ago and still sung in Israel at the time. Great song of joy. Song of worship and praise. He is our deliverer, the Lord.

The one who saves us. And so we cry, Hosanna. Yes, Lord, save us. This phrase is not just a plea for deliverance.

It's also an acknowledgement that we have one who is mighty, who is strong, who is powerful enough to save us from our enemies. And so it became, by this time, very much a statement of praise, a word of praise.

And as the people cry, Hosanna, oh, there's a lot of meaning now in this moment as they're saying this while Jesus is walking down the road.

[8 : 20] Perhaps for some in saying this word, there's that plea for salvation. Though probably for many who used it this way, not the kind of salvation that Jesus has been talking about.

More like it's the come and liberate us from the Romans, save us, deliver us kind of salvation. But there is also in this word the praise part of it.

And I think perhaps some of these people are getting it. Yes, Jesus is the Messiah. He is the one who can save us, who can deliver us. Not just from the Romans, but in every sense, he's the one.

Hosanna. Hosanna. Hosanna. The second thing that John notes them saying, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, in the name of Yahweh, our God.

This is good. This is true. This is who Jesus is. And then finally, he reports them saying, blessed is the king of Israel.

[9 : 28] this final proclamation makes it clear what this moment is all about. Let's not forget that there's already a man sitting on a throne of sorts in Jerusalem.

Let's not forget that there's already a Roman governor over this region under Caesar, the Roman emperor, who has laid claim to this territory as his own.

So this is a big deal. What the people are doing and saying in this moment is actually kind of risky. They are making this into what very much looks like a royal coronation procession for Jesus, a new king, parading him all the way into Jerusalem, an occupied nation that seems that seems to already have a king.

But there's something about this procession that's very different than others. Look at how Jesus comes into the city in verse 14. Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it as it is written, do not be afraid, daughter Zion.

See, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt. Jesus does not come in riding on a war horse with an army ready for battle behind him.

[10 : 59] This is not at all a military procession as if he's now coming to rule or to take over the city by force. He comes on a donkey, a lowly and relatively gentle creature which symbolizes peace.

John tells us that this was the fulfillment of the word of Zechariah long ago. Zechariah chapter 9 verses 9 and 10.

God spoke through Zechariah and this is what Zechariah said. Rejoice greatly, daughter Zion. Shout, daughter Jerusalem. see your king comes to you righteous and victorious lowly and riding on a donkey on a colt the foal of a donkey.

The prophecy goes on. I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war horses from Jerusalem and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations.

His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. So God long ago through the prophet Zechariah told his people that the Messiah would come.

[12 : 20] The king would come just like this. Lowly, gentle, riding on a donkey. And I love what John says about this in verse 16.

He says at first his disciples, this includes him by the way, did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things in Zechariah had been written about Jesus and that these things had been done to him.

I love this. You know, it's not like John and the other disciples at the beginning of Jesus' ministry all sat down with Jesus and they opened up the scriptures and they made a list of all the prophecies that Jesus was to fulfill and then said, all right, let's get some prophecies fulfilled.

What do we got to do? Check, check, check. No. John freely admits, we didn't even know what the deal was with the donkey. Jesus, why a donkey?

Why a young donkey? It wasn't until later. Can you imagine that after Jesus had died and rose and ascended?

[13 : 32] There they are hearing the words of Zechariah or reading them. Look at this. This is exactly what happened. We were there. We saw him. You guys, you were the ones that went and got the donkey for him.

You were fulfilling prophecy and you didn't even know it. Amazing. And that's how it was. In fact, probably not just with this one incident, but probably all over the scriptures in the Old Testament, as the disciples went back, as they looked into the scriptures, here, there, everywhere, what they had just witnessed with Jesus was being proclaimed and described hundreds of years before any of it came to pass.

And many of these things, they were fulfilled and in that moment the disciples didn't even have a clue that this is that fulfillment right here. We're part of it. That's how it works with God.

God, he really does know the end from the beginning. And he is able to work and ensure that none of his words fall to the ground, that every single one of them is fulfilled, regardless of the actions or the decisions that the characters in the story are taking.

It's awesome. It's evidence that he is the Almighty and that Jesus is the one sent from him. We'll come back another time to what it means for Jesus to be glorified.

[15 : 04] Jesus is going to bring that up in chapter 17. But for now, let's come down to verse 17. John goes on, he says, 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.

Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. Now there's a bit of a question here as to which crowd is which, which crowd is when, and which crowd is where.

Some see in these words two crowds, one traveling out from Bethany with Jesus and one traveling out from Jerusalem to meet Jesus. Others also see two crowds, but it's one who had been at Lazarus' resurrection and ever since has been spreading the word, and one who is now going out to meet Jesus because of the word that they heard.

And if that's the case, then how many of the ones who were at Lazarus' resurrection came out yesterday to Bethany, and how many are now coming out now? And you can kind of see where this all gets mixed up a little bit.

And a lot of this seems to hinge on a, I guess there's a manuscript variant. There's two different streams of manuscripts, and it's the difference of a single Greek letter as to the word, whether it's this word or that word.

[16 : 27] Is it that the crowd being with Jesus when he raised Lazarus from the dead, that crowd was testifying? Or is it the crowd being with Jesus was testifying that he raised Lazarus from the dead?

And it's difficult to say. But here's what is clear. John wants us to know, why are all these people doing something like this?

I mean, running out of the city with palm branches to declare Jesus king. This is serious. The man that they're going out to welcome and declare his king is a wanted man.

And John tells us here in verse 18, one of the big factors in people's minds is this. Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, that's raising Lazarus from the dead.

Because they heard that, they went out to meet him. Literally, for this reason, the crowd met Jesus, because they heard this sign he had done. So however you interpret it, you've got two groups of people.

[17 : 37] One of these groups is testifying about how Jesus called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead. And the other group is hearing this testimony and saying, wow, that's amazing.

If that's the case, this could be the Messiah. And so out they go to meet him. This is key. Without the resurrection of Lazarus, there might not have been a triumphal entry.

It was the critical event leading up to this moment. And it's, you know, as I was thinking about this, it's difficult to say, what are all these people thinking in the crowd?

Are some genuinely believing in Jesus that he is the Messiah? Probably. Are some more interested in him as a political savior and king?

Probably. Are some just going out there to see the miracle man? Probably. For some is real faith beginning to grow?

[18 : 40] Probably. We can only guess. We don't know. But it caused quite the stir that day as they paraded him into the city, declaring him to be the king that comes in the name of Yahweh, with shouts and singing.

Verse 19. So the Pharisees said to one another, see, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him.

I love this. The Pharisees are exasperated. They're so frustrated. Let's look back for a second to chapter 11 verse 57.

There John tells us that the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who found out where Jesus was should report it so that they might arrest him.

Are the people listening to the orders of the Pharisees and the chief priests? Not at all. All of these people, this massive crowd, they're completely disregarding the orders of the religious leaders.

[19 : 52] In fact, they're doing the very opposite. Instead of reporting Jesus, they're going out to welcome him as king. So I guess the Pharisees are frustrated.

frustrated. They've lost, it seems, what little control they had over the people. And what do we do with all these people now?

If they don't follow us, if they don't obey us, if they don't submit to us, how do you bring consequences and instill a fear of authority, a respect of authority into a group that's so large?

They're very frustrated. This is getting us nowhere. They've been trying to turn the people against Jesus and right now in this moment, it seems like they have utterly failed.

Look how the whole world has gone after him. Seems like the kind of exaggeration that we sometimes do when we get really angry or really emotional.

[20 : 52] Everything is going wrong. The whole world has gone after him. Well, not the whole world was, but it sure felt like that to the Pharisees that day. But there's another sense in which there is some truth to this frustrated remark of the Pharisees.

Passover was a big time of year. Historical records suggest that the number of people in the city of Jerusalem at Passover time swelled up to somewhere between one to three million people.

And where did all these people come from? They didn't just come from all over Israel. They came from all over the world, so to speak. There's a list in Acts chapter 2 of the various nations that were represented at Pentecost, a different festival.

It's probably a good place to start as we think about where people may have traveled just to be here in Jerusalem for this Passover, as far as Persia, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, all over Egypt, Libya, Greece, even Rome.

It was people from all over the place that now made up this great crowd that had come for the festival. We're hearing the testimony of how Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and now running out and bringing him in.

[22 : 15] A very diverse group. And so in a sense, indeed, the whole world is going after Jesus just as it should.

But you can start to see here how the religious leaders get to a place where they are so consumed with hate and anger and jealousy towards Jesus that they would stop at nothing to take him out.

Well, what do we do with this whole account? What's in this for us here in 2022?

As I was thinking about this, you know, for a moment here in the story, it was popular to be a Jesus follower. After all the disciples and Jesus had been through and the times nearly arrested and nearly stoned, for a brief moment, it's suddenly popular to be a follower of Jesus.

The disciples, I imagine, were drinking this in. How refreshing. After all we've seen and been through, to hear this massive crowd singing praise and celebrating all in favor of Jesus, our King, our Messiah.

[23 : 39] I'm sure it was a day of rejoicing. But by the end of the week, it's not going to feel like this at all. Jesus will be dead, falsely accused, mistreated, and murdered.

His death demanded by the crowd in Jerusalem. And suddenly, it will not be popular at all to be a Jesus follower or to claim him as King.

And I got thinking about how it's been in our world since then. We've seen this popularity pattern repeated throughout history, haven't we? In different places, God has been gracious.

There's been renewal. There's been revival here and there. Whole nations, at times, have declared themselves Christian, have helped to translate the Bible.

New nations have been founded by settlers, many of whom were Christians. We might think back to the days of Billy Graham. Celebrated around the world as a preacher of the gospel.

[24 : 49] Even the Russians invited him to come over and preach the gospel there because they didn't want to be left out. And there's this sort of popular pride for the moment in being Christian.

but then suddenly it's gone and it's no longer popular to be a Jesus follower. Think of the disciples here in the midst of this.

One day in the crowd proclaiming Jesus is King. Days later in the crowd cowering in fear while the crowd demands that the King be executed.

and as I was thinking about this I got thinking it doesn't really matter whether Jesus is popular today or how popular it is to be a follower of his today.

All that matters today is the truth of whether he is the King of God's choosing the Messiah. It doesn't matter what the world around us thinks about Jesus or is saying about Jesus.

[25 : 55] All that matters is whether he is indeed worthy of our hosannas. Let me take a step back from that.

We do care about the people around us who don't believe that Jesus is the Messiah. We want them to believe as we do but what I'm getting at is this will we let the opinions of others of our world of the people around us will we let their opinions of Jesus soften or dampen our hosannas.

Are you the kind of Jesus follower who only loves to join in the procession and sing the praise when everybody's doing it and it seems like a good time?

Is the King of God's choosing not worthy of our loudest praise our highest praise today and every day no matter what the world thinks and what the world is doing?

Let's go back for a moment to Zechariah chapter 9. Rejoice greatly daughter Zion shout daughter Jerusalem see your King comes to you righteous and victorious lowly and riding on a donkey on a colt the foal of a donkey but what else does Zechariah say about this King?

[27 : 22] He says he will proclaim peace to the nations his rule will extend from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth do you hear that?

this same King who rode into Jerusalem on a donkey will someday come to proclaim peace to the nations and his rule will know no bounds from sea to sea he will be King to the ends of the earth but are you going to wait till then to sing Hosanna?

Listen every Sunday when we come together we have the opportunity and the privilege to lift our voices in song and in praise and to sing Hosanna and blessing to our King whether it's popular in the world or not doesn't matter whether it's popular to be in church on Sunday mornings in Davidson doesn't matter Jesus is the same King back then today and forever so let's not wait until Palm Sunday to make a joyful noise to rejoice greatly let's do it every Sunday let's not worry about what that person sitting over there in the church will think if they hear us singing at the top of our lungs to Jesus Jesus is worthy of it he's the King before whom every person will one day bow down think about that everybody in the Canadian government today will one day bow down before him the Queen of England who's never bowed down to anyone in her life probably will bow down before Jesus the President of the United States the entire Assembly of the United Nations every person represented in that group will bow down someday to Jesus he's coming back to this earth and he will rule it all but let's not wait until that day to let the whole world know the truth of our great King every Sunday should be Palm Sunday for us till he comes again to rule to Zion or takes us to be with him

Hosanna in the highest our King has come and he's coming again let's pray Father in heaven what a great hope we have what an awesome thing you are doing help us to keep our eyes on that in these days it's tough there are so many things that pull our attention away but you are the one who saves us and Jesus you are our King I pray that you would give us eyes of faith to see that and to live in light of that and you're coming again today and every day glory to you Amen