

The King Worth Everything

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Preacher: Andrew Price

[0 : 00] Well, about 20 years ago, when my wife Michelle and I had just gotten married, we were at a church in New South Wales, and we were doing some ministry there. I mean, we were working and doing some ministry on the side.

And one of the guys we were doing ministry with was a guy called Nigel. Nigel and his wife were expecting their first child, which was very exciting. But when the child was born, there was a complication, and their son died.

The doctors declared him dead and told Nigel and his wife the bad news. Obviously, there was huge heartache, particularly because his wife couldn't leave the hospital straightaway. She had a C-section, so she had to stay to recover for a while in the same hospital. Her son had died. But about three hours later, I think it was from memory, the nurse went in to dispose of the body.

She heard a noise. The baby was alive. The doctors could not believe it. And so obviously, the parents are overjoyed. And do you know what Nigel named his son? Lazarus.

[1 : 01] True story. He's alive and well in New South Wales today. And in fact, they were so grateful to God. I mean, you can imagine it, can't you? They've not stopped serving him.

They even at the time tried to evangelize the doctors. Look! But despite the evidence being right in front of the doctors, they wouldn't believe. It is a great story, isn't it?

God can and does do miracles in our day. But some Christians then expect God to always act like this in our day. After all, these sorts of miracles seem to happen in Jesus' day, so why not ours? Well, because the miracles in Jesus' day were for a particular purpose. John called them signs to point people to who Jesus is that they might believe in him.

And we know that because that's the purpose of his book, which I showed you again last week. Notice Jesus performed many other signs or miracles. And John has recorded these that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the King, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

[2 : 15] And so while God does do miracles today, don't mishear me, they are not as common as they were in Jesus' day. Because Jesus has been pointed to and the early church has begun.

And now the church grows by spreading the word, the written testimony of those who were in Jesus' day. Notice how John says, these are written in the word that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah.

But I also tell this story about Lazarus from New South Wales because Lazarus from the Bible is still very much on view in our passage today. In fact, it seems to be the thread that John uses to link these three seemingly separate scenes together.

So on the next slide there, in the first part of the last bit of chapter 11, the reason they're trying to arrest him is because Jesus rose Lazarus from the dead primarily.

And in the next scene, John tells us twice about Lazarus rising from the dead. And in the last scene towards the end of our passage, again, we're told about Lazarus rising from the dead.

[3 : 28] It's the thread that runs through our passage. Now unpack these more as we go, but let's pick it up at scene one in your outlines. And chapter 11 verse 55 in your Bibles.

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover.

And we just need to pause here for a moment. After spending 11 chapters on three years of Jesus' life, John is now about to spend the next eight chapters on just one week of his life.

He's really slowing down the action. What's about to happen in his last week is really important. And it begins with the Passover. So really in your Bibles, there should be another heading. I think they

just got it in the wrong spot there.

But the Passover, if you remember, was a festival that the Jews celebrated every year around our Easter time. It celebrated how God saved Israel from Egypt through the blood of a sacrificial lamb. [4 : 31] So you remember there was nine plagues on Egypt, warning Pharaoh to let his people Israel go. And then there was the 10th and final plague, which forced Pharaoh's hand to let them go.

But the problem is, this 10th plague, this angel would take the firstborn in every family in the land, Israel's included. And so God told Israel and anyone else who would listen for that matter, that the way to be saved from this was through a sacrificial lamb.

You sacrifice the lamb, and then you paint the blood on the door frames like this. And so when the angel coming for judgment sees the blood of the lamb, it would pass over the house.

Hence Passover festival. And so every year, the Jews would sacrifice a lamb at the temple, and they would have lamb roast for dinner, yum, to remember how God saved them from Egypt through this sacrificial lamb.

But because the men had to carry the lamb into the court of priests at the temple, where the altar was to sacrifice it, then before they carried it in, they had to cleanse themselves, which is what their cleansing is referring to in verse 55.

[5 : 40] They would come to these baths just south of the temple, like this one, which was filled with water, as you can imagine. It wasn't empty, obviously. And they would step in and kind of wash themselves in a ceremonial cleansing so they could then enter the temple with Lenny the lamb, or whoever, not whoever, the lamb.

And so these bars are there today, and that's what it's referring to in verse 55. But it seems their minds are not actually on the Passover. Because look at verse 56.

They kept looking for Jesus. As they stood in the temple courts, they asked one another, well, what do you think? Isn't he coming to the festival at all?

In fact, their question is more positive than that. It's more like, he is coming, isn't he? They are expecting Jesus to turn up, and they're full of anticipation, given what they've heard about him.

In fact, given what we'll see as some of these people do later, in chapter 12, it seems they think he could just be the promised king, the Messiah.

[6 : 48] But their response stands in stark contrast to the Jewish leaders. Verse 57, but 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.

Here, the religious leaders are looking for Jesus too, but for a very different reason, aren't they? Why? Well, because of the signs and Lazarus in particular.

Now, it's hard to see it in our passage, but just flick back one page in your Bibles to chapter 11, verse 43. We'll move through this pretty quickly. So chapter 11, verse 43 is when Jesus calls in a loud voice, Lazarus, come out.

And Lazarus is raised from the dead. Verse 46, some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done, raising Lazarus. And so verse 47, they chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin.

What are we accomplishing? They asked. Here is this man performing many signs like Lazarus. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him. And then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation.

[7 : 58] Then one of them named Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year, he spoke up, you know nothing at all. You did not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than the whole nation perish.

He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation and not only for that nation, but also for us, the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.

So do you see that the raising of Lazarus is actually the catalyst for this Jewish government to officially decide Jesus must die.

That's why they're looking for Jesus at the feast, to arrest him in order to kill him. It reminds me of a church notice I once saw.

I think I might have shown you this before, but anyway. It's a morning sermon. Look, Jesus walks on the water. Evening sermon, looking for Jesus. Now, of course, Jesus has not drowned in our

passage today.

[8 : 59] He just hasn't arrived at Jerusalem yet, which is why they're still looking. Instead, he stopped off at Bethany, about three kilometers away from Jerusalem, where he is anointed.

So we're now up to scene two and chapter 12, verse one and two. Six days before the Passover now, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived.

Whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus's honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him.

So you see the scene? There's a dinner given in Jesus's honor. And notice how John makes sure we know that Lazarus is there. Do you notice that? In fact, John even adds, Whom Jesus raised from the dead.

Why does he need to do that? I mean, it's a significant miracle, isn't it? Wouldn't you remember? And how many Lazaruses or Lazarai, whatever the plural is, are living in Bethany that he has to distinguish between them?

[10 : 00] Surely not that many. It seemed John wants us to know that what happens next is because of this particular sign, Jesus raising Lazarus.

So what happens? Well, verse three, when Mary took, so this is at the dinner, then Mary took about a pint of pure nard and expensive perfume.

She poured it on Jesus's feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. Now, I don't know a lot about perfumes.

It's not something I generally wear. Actually, it's not something I ever wear, just for the record. But I do know there are different types. Like, you know, there's different fragrances. Chanel number five, Chanel number four, three, two, I don't know.

I also know there's different costs of perfume. There's expensive and really expensive. This is the really expensive type. In fact, if you look at verse five, we're told that it's worth a year's wages.

[11 : 04] That's expensive. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in Victoria last year, the average yearly wage was \$84,000.

I know you're immediately thinking, oh, I'm being underpaid or overpaid or whatever it is, but can you imagine owning a perfume worth that much? It's extraordinary. It's likely this was a family heirloom, perhaps to be used sparingly for special occasions.

Certainly as a pure nard, perhaps it was to be watered down so it could go further. And yet here is Mary pouring it all on Jesus. All \$84,000 worth.

It's a radical response, isn't it? But that's not all. She then let down her hair in public, which in the culture of the day was a no-no. She goes against her culture and invites social embarrassment upon herself.

But that's still not all. She then uses her hair to clean Jesus' dirty feet. That's the job of a servant. This is really a radical response, isn't it?

[12 : 19] Or is it? I mean, what would you do for the one who raised your loved one from the dead? What would the one be worth if he could raise you from the dead?

Would that one be worth going against your culture for? Would that one be worth inviting some social embarrassment? Will that one be worth your family's most prized possession or being his servant?

You see, because Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, then Mary knows he is the Messiah, the King, just like Martha confessed last week. And she also knows he is worth her everything.

This one who can bring life in the face of death. Her response wasn't radical to her. But I tell you what, it was to Judas. Have a look at verse 4.

But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray Jesus, objected. Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.

[13 : 31] He did not say this because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, a keeper of the money bag he used to help himself to what was put in it. Now in verse 5, Judas does ask what seems like a sensible question.

After all, it is a lot of money. So it could have helped a lot of poor, couldn't it? But either side of verse 5, John makes sure we know that Judas is dodgy.

John wants us to know that Judas' sensible sounding question is really a cover-up for his self-interest and greed. And his self-interest and greed has also blinded Judas to who Jesus really is.

I mean, Judas saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead and the evidence of that, that is, Lazarus, is eating a meal right in front of him. And yet, despite the evidence in front of him, Judas, he doesn't really see who Jesus is.

He's more concerned, blinded by his greed or self-interest. And sadly, it's the same today, isn't it? Despite the evidence we have for Jesus, both his miracles, even his resurrection, despite the fact that Christianity makes the best sense of our world, I think, compared to other religions, despite the help and hope Jesus really does offer us today, despite all that, people are blinded by their own self-interest in this world.

[15:00] And perhaps it's not greed, but it might be money or it might be their study, or it might be the secular peer pressure, such that they don't see Jesus for who he really is, even when the evidence is right there in front of them to look at.

And even when Jesus died for them, do you see verse 7? Leave her alone, Jesus replied. It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.

You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me. Jesus himself says he is worth it, doesn't he? They will always have the poor to care for, but he won't always be with them physically, because he's about to die.

That's why in verse 7, Jesus gives this extra meaning to Mary's radical act of worship, saying she has anointed him for his burial.

He's about to die. And given the repetition of the Passover in our passage at the end of chapter 11 and the beginning of chapter 12, I suspect John wants us to see this death of Jesus as the sacrificial lamb.

[16:18] The one who would die to save us, not from Egypt, but from sin and death. After all, that's what John highlighted right at the beginning of his book. He's the only one to record this about John the Baptist who saw Jesus and said, look, the Lamb of God, Passover Lamb, who takes away the sin of the world.

Jesus is the one who will die to give us life. You see, as sinners, we are spiritually dead to God and we face eternal death for our sins.

When my son was little, one of his favorite kid songs was a memory verse put to music by Colin Buchanan. Many of you will know of Colin Buchanan. He used to be a presenter on ABC's Play School and he's put lots of Bible verses to music.

And his favorite song came with actions and this was it. For the wages of sin is death. That's the bit he loved. Typical boy. But the point is that's the wage or consequence for sin, isn't it?

Death. But Jesus died our death in our place to take our punishment for us so that we don't have to. And instead, we can be given new spiritual life with God now.

[17:34] As we saw last week, life that never ends, that keeps going through death and then new physical resurrection life later. It's only by his death for us that Jesus can be our resurrection and life.

And someone who is willing to do that for us, who is willing to die to take our judgment in our place so that he can raise our loved ones and us, is that one not worth a year's wages?

Is that one not worth believing in? Certainly many thought so. Verse 9. Meanwhile, a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came not only because of him, but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.

So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well. For an account of him, many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.

It seems like many left Jerusalem and walked the roughly three kilometers to Bethany to see Jesus and Lazarus. And notice how John again adds, whom Jesus raised from the dead.

[18:48] because he wants us to know that what happens next is a result of this sign. That is, that these Jews believe in Jesus because of this sign.

But again, in stark contrast, the chief priests want to kill Lazarus as well now so that people will stop believing in Jesus. They want to get rid of the evidence for who Jesus is.

Like a crooked cop might want to bury the evidence to convict an innocent person. Of course, they'd better kill Jesus first because if they kill Lazarus, well, Jesus can just raise him from the dead again, can't he?

But since many of the Jews did believe, then it's no wonder the next day they go out to meet him and declare him king. So at scene three, verse 12. 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. Here, a great crowd comes to meet Jesus.

[19 : 57] I suspect it would have included some who went to Bethany the night before, but also many others who came for the Passover festival. And in verse 13, they all shout Hosanna, which we sang earlier in our service.

Originally, the word Hosanna means save now. It's part and the Jews sang that at Passover time. In fact, I was going to ask Vijay to see if you could all sing it to you. But they sang that to remember how God saved them from Egypt. And those coming in the name of the Lord were the pilgrims coming up to the temple.

And those already at the temple would call to them and welcome them. So let me explain it to you on the next slide here. So Lord save us now. That's the word Hosanna in the Hebrew.

Grant us success. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. And originally that referred to the pilgrims coming up to the temple. Which is why the next verse says those at the temple already from the house the temple of the Lord we bless you as you come up.

[21 : 03] That's how it originally worked. But by Jesus' day Hosanna became an expression of praise and the Jews saw the one who would come in the name of the Lord not as an ordinary pilgrim but as the king the Messiah.

This is made clear by the words at the end of verse 13 in your Bibles where they say blessed is the king of Israel. That's not in Psalm 118.

who they think Jesus now is. But Jesus is not a political king who rides on a war horse. He's a humble king that rides on a donkey.

That's what John highlights 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.

John quotes from Zechariah our first reading. And what he emphasizes here is that Jesus is a humble king, that he rides on a donkey. Why does he emphasize this?

[22 : 13] Well, because people wanted a political king who would save them from the Romans. But Jesus has not come to the Passover festival to be a political king. He's come as a humble king to die as a sacrificial lamb and save us from sin and death.

Now, of course, that's a lot to take in from just riding on a donkey, isn't it? And so no wonder we read in verse 16, at first that his disciples did not understand all this. I don't think we would have either.

Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him. And next week we'll see that Jesus' glorification is another way of talking about his death.

And so it's only after his death the disciples understood him to be this humble king, this one who would die for our sins as the Passover lamb. But even still, Jesus, by raising Lazarus from the dead, has already done enough for people to believe in him, to follow him as their king.

Verse 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. Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet Jesus.

[23 : 39] And so the Pharisees said to one another, see, this is getting us nowhere, look how the whole world has gone after him. I like in the other scenes, this one also ends with the Jewish leaders, but this time it's the Pharisees who complain that their plan to arrest and kill Jesus is going nowhere.

But again, that stands in contrast to the people in verse 18 before them. They go out to meet Jesus and presumably meet him as their king. The phrase went out to meet him is exactly what was used in verse 13 when the people declared Jesus as king.

And these many people don't just go out to meet Jesus as their king but to follow him as their king. Notice how the Pharisees say in verse 19 the whole world has gone after him as though to follow him.

Why? Well again because of Lazarus. Do you see how this is the thread that runs all the way through these scenes? But do notice it's not because these people in verse 17 again those who were there when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead spread the word or literally bore witness.

Then verse 18 because they heard this eyewitness testimony that was enough for them to go and follow Jesus as king. And this is good news for us I think because none of us here have seen Jesus in the flesh have we?

[25 : 14] seen Jesus raise the dead and very few of us have seen amazing miracles like the family in New South Wales who saw their son come back to life but we don't have to like these people here reliable eyewitness testimony is enough for us to believe just like it's enough for a court of law actually in fact the Pharisees saw other signs and did not believe in Jesus and so seeing no guarantee you'll believe the Pharisees didn't like the doctors with New South Wales Lazarus didn't believe even though the evidence is right there in front of them seeing does not guarantee believing but reliable eyewitness testimony which the Bible has been shown to be is enough for us to believe so don't ever if you're sharing the Bible with someone or sharing the gospel don't ever think you have to pray for some miraculous sign before they'll believe this is enough to realize that

Jesus is no ordinary person that he is the king who by his death saves us from sin and gives us life it's enough for us to believe in him that we may have life in his name that's why John has written his eyewitness testimony I remember a time in school where we used to have to get vaccinations and we'd all have to line up I don't know if they still do that these days but it reminded me of another photo I saw of that happening on the next slide we'll skip that one and go to this one there there's all these different reactions isn't there there's clearly the first one and I like the second one though he knows he's next so he's quite concerned about it all but the reason I show this picture is because we've been given a whole stack of reactions and responses in our passage I don't know if you noticed that there's all these contrasting responses to Jesus and his raising of Lazarus from the dead and so will we respond like the

Jewish leaders who stubbornly refuse to believe despite the evidence in front of them or like Judas who is blinded by self interest and greed or in our case perhaps the opinions of the world or will we respond like the crowds who at this point at least believe and follow him as king and for us who do believe then will we continue to do so to believe that he's our king so much so that we act like it that we listen to him and follow him and obey him I can't remember if I've told you this story before I'm very sorry but I remember being at a big Christian conference when I was 18 years old up in Sydney Kutuba mountains and we were learning about Jesus being the king and at lunchtime I drove into Kutuba which is very hilly if you've ever been there so it's got these really nice big hills and as a pea plater I couldn't resist myself I put the foot on the gas and

I shamefully broke the speed limit by quite a bit when I got back from lunch we had a few notices and one of the notices was this the guy got up and said if Jesus is our king then we should act like it on the roads to this day I have no idea whether that announcement was just for me but you see if we continue to believe in Jesus as our king then we should act like it should we even if our actions might seem a bit much or a bit radical to the world I remember a guy from church who mentioned what he did on the weekend to a colleague including going to church and the colleague said oh did you how often do you go and the guy replied oh every week I can what that's a bit much isn't it and he kind of laughed and scoffed by a bit much he meant a bit radical and as he laughed other colleagues turned and heard and so he was subjected to this so-called social embarrassment but for this guy he didn't care he knew who Jesus is how Jesus died and offers him life beyond death Jesus was worth it for him or another guy from our church who got his taxes done by an accountant just last year for the first time and apparently the accountant noticed how much he was giving each week to church and he said the accountant is this right you sure do you want to keep doing this you know maybe world vision one-off hit there be a good person maybe the bushfire relief you know make yourself feel good you're doing this every week you still want to continue it's a bit much isn't it a bit radical but not for this guy he knows who Jesus is and how he died for him to give him life beyond death it was worth it it's interesting the only time John records Jesus speaking in our passage today is when Jesus defends Mary it's as though her response is the one to be commended above all for when we really recognize who Jesus is the one who died to pay for our sins the one who can raise our loved ones who believe from death who can raise us who believe then is he not worth serving as our king is he not worth our money is he not worth going against our culture if we have to or even inviting social embarrassment if we need to if we realize who Jesus truly is then is this king not worth our everything let's pray our gracious heavenly father we do thank you again for this reminder this morning of who Jesus is what he did for us at the cross and what he will do for us when he returns father in light of who Jesus is we pray that our hearts might be filled

with thankfulness and that we might continue to serve him without everything we ask these things in his name amen fucking what he is without giving things inely what he does■■■ people that they