

A Nation Affirms that Jesus is the Messiah

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[0:00] Christ is our hope in life and death. And that was the refrain that we sang right before this time of the word.

! We're going to look in the scriptures this morning and I would encourage you to turn there with me in John chapter 12. John chapter 12. If you're using the Pew Bible, it's on page 898.

We're going to see through the course of this passage kind of the outworking of that truth. Jesus Christ, our hope in life and death. What does that mean? What does he offer to us?

Are those empty promises or is Jesus in fact the one who makes it all possible? Well, Jesus will have made a statement right before our passage in John chapter 11 where he'll raise Lazarus from the dead and he will claim both to Martha and to Mary that I am the resurrection and the life.

Jesus is our hope for life and death. And we celebrate that through the triumphal entry. We celebrate that now in Palm Sunday. But I imagine that as you think about Palm Sunday, and I'm thinking back to my childhood and Sunday school classes, we were all given those palm branches, right?

[1:26] That we would wave as kind of a celebration sign. We're recognizing that Jesus is the king. And so we wave those palm branches. Just a fun way to remember this special Palm Sunday.

Well, Jesus did come into Jerusalem. He did ride in on a donkey. He was making a claim to kingship, that he was in fact the son of David.

But as we turn to our passage this morning in John chapter 12, John gives us not just a glimpse of Jesus as king, but we're going to see something unique about who Jesus is in the claim that he makes and how it's attached with him being the resurrection and the life and why that matters this morning.

So the triumphal entry in John chapter 12, and I'm trying to demonstrate this to us this morning as we look at our passage today. John chapter 12 is more like a courtroom scene, as it were, where the verdict has been given, where the declaration of truth has finally been conveyed, and the people who are standing there, this entire nation that has gathered there because of Jesus and the Passover that is going to be taking place during this week, this final verdict is made that Jesus is the Messiah.

Why? Well, as you think about courtroom trials, I'm sure that all of us can maybe watch the shows or maybe even have witnessed some courtroom trials in our own experience.

[3:06] And you know that there are moments in the courtroom where everyone has their own opinions, where everyone has been listening to arguments.

They have their suspicions about what the truth is, whether this individual is guilty or innocent. There are theories, perhaps. There are stories that you've heard.

There are truth claims that have been made. But then there's that one moment, perhaps, when the prosecution brings this one piece of evidence, and it changes the scene of the entire courtroom.

The whispers stop. The room kind of leans forward. And the question is no longer, well, what do you think? The question is, what are we going to do with this evidence that's been given in front of us?

John chapter 12 is that scene. John chapter 12 is that final definitive statement, at least temporary statement, of this nation that has finally come to terms with a sign that Jesus has given.

[4:14] And at least in this moment, as Jesus is entering Jerusalem, they are all declaring emphatically, Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus had taught and healed here.

His ministry had spanned three years of public ministry. People have had their opinions. People have given their feedback. People have asked their questions.

People have seen and witnessed the miracles and heard the statements that Jesus made. But now, in John chapter 12, Jesus has performed a sign that is unquestionable.

A sign that is undisputed. The evidence is so convincing and the verdict is so certain that now an entire nation has come to cast their vote, as it were.

In this moment, the whole nation has decided. Jesus is, in fact, the Messiah, as they will state. In John chapter 12, we read this story of a city that's forced to reckon with all of the evidence that has been placed in front of it.

[5:18] And at least for now, they have come to the conclusion, yes, Jesus is the Messiah. Well, what is that sign? Well, we're going to look at that sign this morning.

That sign of Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead. It wasn't just something that was hearsay. It wasn't something that was distant. It was something that was known.

And the religious leaders who were now present had seen it for themselves. This risen man, Lazarus, risen from the dead. And there he was along with them in Bethany.

So we look at John chapter 12. Turn there with me if you would. And we're going to see that Jesus is now in the spotlight. Jesus is now the focus of attention.

And at each step along the way, we need to understand that there is a response that's necessary from us. This first response is, fix your attention on Jesus.

[6:18] Fix your attention on Jesus. That's what John wants us to do as he begins this narrative. In verse 12, he says, Notice how John frames this.

He wants to draw attention to the crowd's response. Notice this large crowd had come. This large crowd took branches.

This large crowd went out to meet. This large crowd cried, Hosanna. They are kind of the center of all the action that's taking place in this narrative. And what John is trying to help us understand is there is a response that is required.

What will you do with all the evidence that's been put in front of you? And at least here in John chapter 12, the crowd has gotten it right. They're fixing their attention.

Their focus is on their Messiah. We compare this with the other gospel records and kind of draw out this theme for us and help us appreciate what's taking place uniquely in John.

[7:42] In Matthew chapter 21, verse 1, it says this, Now, when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent his two disciples. Jesus is the main actor in this narrative.

Jesus is the one taking initiative. Then in Mark chapter 11, much the same way. Now, when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples.

Then in Luke's account, Luke chapter 19, verses 28 and 29, And when he had said these things, he went on ahead going up to Jerusalem. When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of his disciples.

Immediately would recognize something is different about John's account. And this is an interpretive clue for us. Those of us who want to be Bible students, we need to pay attention to details because the writer, John, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is trying to tell us something.

What does he want us to know? What point is he trying to make for us? You see, maybe in the other synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we might get the impression that a crowd is kind of caught up in the moment.

[9:00] The crowd is kind of captured by all the things that are unfolding in front of them. But John's account helps us understand, no, everything that is taking place here is deliberate.

Everything that is happening here is a response to information that they know. It's planned. It's methodic. And then we begin to see the details of this account, the details of the account in John that differ from the details in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

And they're all true, by the way, but what are the details that draws our attention to that helps us understand the point that he's trying to make? In Matthew chapter 21, there are 11 verses that

describe this account, this triumphal entry.

In Mark, there are 10 verses that describe this triumphal entry. In Luke, there are 17 verses. He gives the most attention to this account and wants to draw our attention to the specific details that mark Jesus out as the king who's come to Jerusalem.

In these accounts, and I have a graphic here for you, there are two slides, maybe too small to see, but you still get the point. The point is that Jesus is the one who's selecting disciples.

[10:19] 15 different characteristics, features that are true of all of these gospel accounts, but we're going to see there's a difference in the gospel of John. Jesus selects two disciples.

These disciples are to go into this village named Bethany. They are to retrieve this donkey. They are told how to find the donkey. They're told what to say to the owner when he questions them about taking this donkey.

The multitudes have gathered. They now have lain down their cloaks and some pick up branches. They cry, Hosanna, and then Jesus enters into Jerusalem in a public way.

And then we turn to John. And everything begins to change as we read John's account. The triumphal entry in the gospel of John comprises four verses and four verses alone.

There's no mention of Bethphage. There's no instructions to disciples. There's no retrieving of the cult. There's no statement of Christ's authority. There's no cloaks.

[11:23] There's no mention of Jesus actually making his way into the city of Jerusalem. Just the crowds and palm branches crying out Hosanna and Jesus is seated on a donkey.

Why? The truncated account. What is John trying to do for the listeners who are hearing this story? What is the point of all of these things?

What are the things that we need to derive and understand personally as we look into this account ourselves? That becomes clearer when we begin to see kind of the broader context of what's taking place.

And I want to just draw our attention to this briefly. Notice that what just happens just before this account of the triumphal entry in verses 9 and 10. Notice the repetition.

When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead.

[12:26] So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death. We have this massive crowd. We have a group of individuals. They're gathering for a reason.

They're gathering because of Lazarus. They've heard what Christ had done in Bethany just a few months before. And they're there on account of Jesus but they're also there on account of what Jesus has done with Lazarus.

And they're furious. The religious leaders are furious and they make plans to put Lazarus to death. Let's extinguish or exterminate the evidence.

Now notice the verses just after our account. Beginning in verse 17. The crowds that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness.

The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard that he had done this sign. So the Pharisees said to one another you see that they're gaining nothing.

[13:30] Look, the whole world has gone after him. Here again we see Lazarus. And in John's own words in verse 18 the reason why all the crowds have gathered it's there in verse 18 the reason why the crowds went out to meet him was that they had heard that he had done this sign.

And this word sign will now become kind of this keyword throughout the gospel of John that will help us to try to understand what the whole point of this triumphal entry was and the whole point of Jesus' public ministry was.

Now we take another step back. We expand our view. We back up now to John chapter 12 the very beginning in verse 1 it says six days before the Passover Jesus therefore came to Bethany where Lazarus was whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at the table. Jesus had just been in Jericho and Jesus had made this trek it was a 17 mile trek in a

3,000 feet in elevation from the ground floor as it were of where Jericho was up to the elevation where Bethany was.

They were exhausted and it was a journey that probably would have taken all day and so this stop of refreshment is taking place in Bethany at the end of this long trip. And there Jesus is with this family that's become so beloved and so near to his heart Mary and Martha and Lazarus are there.

[15:09] Now we back up one more time to the previous chapter in chapter 11. You're acquainted with this narrative. You know this story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

You're acquainted with his work there that Martha when she knew that her brother was sick she is sent to fetch Jesus who was about a day's journey away.

Jesus by design waited he delayed for another few days then he makes his way up to Bethany and as the text will tell us that Lazarus has died.

He's been in the grave for three days but Jesus goes to the grave he has the stone rolled away which is emblematic of what's going to happen in just a couple of days.

Lazarus has died the stone is rolled away Jesus makes a public statement I am the resurrection and the life he speaks to Lazarus and Lazarus comes forth raised from the dead.

[16:11] The immediate response to this very public miracle is found in verses 45 to 57. Notice in verse 45 many of the religious leaders who were from Jerusalem friends of the family as it were believed in him but there were others verse 46 some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done and they were not happy.

Verse 47 here's our key phrase again for what are we to do for this man performs many signs finally a sign that they could all agree on.

Their concern we find in verse 48 that everyone will believe in him and the Romans will come and take away our place. So what does Jesus do? We find in verse 54 Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews but went from there to the region near the wilderness to a town called Ephraim and there stayed with his disciples.

Why? Because verse 57 the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was he should let them know and they might arrest him.

It was a dangerous place now that Jesus had performed this very public sign that was now not only confirmed but validated by those who were there.

[17:35] This unmistakable irrefutable evidence that Jesus was in fact the Messiah. This claim that he had been making all along now confirmed.

Now remember what John's goal is in writing his gospel. We find that in John chapter 20 verse 30 it says now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Jesus did signs and John wrote the gospel so that you would believe. The story of the triumphal entry isn't just information.

it's not just about Jesus making claims it's about Jesus being worshipped. Fix your eyes on Jesus. That's the message that we find here in just the first few verses.

Fix your eyes on Jesus. Focus on him. Let him be the center of your affection the focus of your desire the goal of your love and obedience.

[18:44] obedience. Next we're encouraged to marvel at his bold obedience. Marvel at his bold obedience. Coming back to verse 12 of John chapter 12 it says this the next day the large crowd that had come to feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.

Jesus is coming he's coming out of the hidden spaces in the parts away from the Jordan River he's coming out of concealment and he's walking headlong into the dangerous city of Jerusalem.

The crowds are there. They heard that Jesus was coming and so what do they do? Well they take branches of palm trees they go out to meet him they cry out Hosanna there is this understanding that something significant was unfolding in front of them but their action is only a response to this bold obedience on the part of our Lord.

Jesus is bold obedience remember Jesus is doing this intentionally there's a design behind what's going on here we saw that briefly in John 11 54 we saw that Jesus therefore no longer walked

openly among the Jews but went from there to the regions near the wilderness why did he do that? Well he did that because of timing he did that because of God's design so this was the consistent pattern of our Lord Jesus understood the timing of the father and Jesus up to this moment would conceal himself John chapter 5 verse 13 says now the man who had been healed did not know who he was for Jesus had withdrawn as there was a crowd in that place John chapter 6 verse 15 perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself John chapter 7 verse 1 after this Jesus went about in Galilee he would not go about in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill him John chapter 8 verse 59 so they picked up stones to throw at him but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple John chapter 10 verses 39 and 40 again they sought to arrest him but he escaped from their hands he went away across the

[21:10] Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first and there he remained why did Jesus do that because Jesus was instrumentally controlling the circumstances Jesus was in charge Jesus was king he knew it was going down and it was through the definite and divine plan of God that he would now make his approach and boldly in obedience make his way into Jerusalem you see Jesus knew that that the father had designed a time for him again we find that as a common theme throughout the gospel of John John chapter 2 verse 4 and Jesus said to her woman what does this have to do with me my hour has not yet come then in John chapter 7 verse 6 Jesus said to them my time has not yet come John chapter 7 verse 8 you go up to the feast I'm not going up to this feast for my time has not yet fully come John chapter 7 verse 30 so they were seeking to arrest him but no one laid a hand on him because his hour had not yet come

Jesus is the master of his destiny following the decrees of the father working out boldly obedience he will be the one to set in motion the events that now unfold in John chapter 12 because he is the one who is orchestrating them ultimately he does this to establish once and for all that he is the resurrection in the life and now these two statements come together that he is Messiah that he is the sent one but also that he is this resurrection in the life that in the shadow of John 11 and the resurrection of Lazarus now the resurrection in life comes forward to prove that case so the crowds that journeyed with him from Jericho are now the messengers they made this trip along with Jesus Jesus stops in Bethany but the rest of the crowds make their way into Jerusalem and the whole city is abuzz because of what

Jesus has and after this long trip from Jericho Jesus now enjoys some refreshment and even in this time of fellowshiping with Martha and Mary and Lazarus this course of events that's unfolding in Jerusalem wants to draw our attention now to this honor Jesus for who he is honor Jesus for who he is recognize him wonder at him fix your eyes on him but once you have come to terms with who he is honor him for who he is and that's what Mary does she sets the example really for us this private example of one who has come come to appreciate at least in her own mind the fullness of who Christ is his identity and the gratitude of what Christ has done for her family we're in John chapter 12 verse 1!

it says six days before the Passover Jesus therefore came to Bethany where Lazarus was whom Jesus had raised from the dead so they gave a dinner for him there Martha served and Lazarus was one of those who reclining at the table with him Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume and you know the story Judas protests he actually had ulterior motives he wanted to line his own pockets with the money from this perfume but Jesus commends Mary remember why he says there in verse 7 Jesus says leave her alone so that she may keep it for the day of my burial maybe a more helpful translation is this Jesus said to her let her alone she has kept this for the day of my burial Jesus knows what Mary is doing Mary is unaware what did

Mary think she was doing I think Mary just in this moment was so full of worship she was so full of gratitude Jesus had done something significant for her family remember how heartbroken she was at the loss of her brother and remember how she's there weeping at the tomb Jesus comes and he meets with her and he reminds her I'm the resurrection the life then he raises her brother from the dead and then in the moments later the months later that we find here in John chapter 12 what is

Mary doing she's so full of gratitude so full of thanks and in her deep gratitude she realizes that sometimes gratitude is just not sufficient with words that true deep meaningful gratitude needs to be expressed in sacrifice in action and so she buys this expensive perfume she anoints

[26:26] Jesus with it and in so doing unawares she is also setting forth the symbol of what Christ will do in just a few days from then we find that she's doing this for the day of his burial you see if the resurrection in life is going to be that resurrection that offers resurrection life for us then Jesus needed to die and Mary didn't understand that but she is commemorating his future death that just a few days from then he will die and this entire city is electrified by Jesus his nearness we find this city that would also need to honor Jesus for who he was and finally they come to a place of recognizing that the sign that he had given was a sign that they could trust John chapter 12 verses 9 and 10 says this when the large crowd of

Jews learned that Jesus was there they came not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead so the chief priest made plans to put Lazarus to death as well they're there because finally all of the miracles that Jesus had done all the signs that he had performed now culminate in this ultimate sign this sign that was undisputed and we find that there in John chapter 12 verse 17 and 18 a great sign had been done notice verse 18 the crowd went to meet because they heard he had done this sign a great sign had been done you remember that the Jews were constantly looking for signs they wanted to know Jesus is making these claims how can we know for sure that he's for real he was a man attested to them by signs and wonders as we saw in

Acts chapter 2 but they're looking for it themselves the beginning of the gospel of John sets this up for us in it says this the first of his signs Jesus did at Cana in Galilee and manifested his glory and his disciples believed in him but then in verse 18 we see so the Jews said to him what sign do you show us for doing these things Jesus had given them signs but those signs were not enough until we finally get to this ultimate sign this sign of Jesus raising Lazarus from time this clear undisputed sign has come into the public view and finally the nation has embraced the Messiah at least for now Jesus had done mighty works before but now Lazarus was this sign that Jerusalem could not keep at a distance it was a sign that they could all recognize and confirm and attest to the fact that Jesus was in fact the person he claimed figure they celebrate this true Messiah that they finally have come to recognize for themselves they want to honor him but then we come to our final point this morning and that is this beware that celebration is not the same as faith beware that celebration is not the same as faith we come to this statement one more time in verses 12 to 15 the next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem so they took branches of palm trees and they went out to meet him crying Hosanna blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord even the king of Israel and Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it just as it written fear not daughters of Zion behold your king!

sitting on a donkey's colt the city had recognized this they were celebrating Jesus as Messiah and yet there was a sense in which they really didn't understand the fullness of what was about to happen their celebration was empty their celebration didn't include the deep roots of faith they were responding to the events that they saw and not responding to the Savior who continued to present himself to them so they come with these festal palms palms that carry this biblical association of celebration we find throughout the scriptures Leviticus 23 verse 40 this is the feast of tabernacles and this was a different holiday but you can see how palm branches are woven into this celebration it says and you shall take on the first day of the fruit of the splendid trees branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook and you shall rejoice before the

[31:46] Lord your God seven of those in this nation was the celebration that would happen through palm branches it's also kind of an allusion to what we'll see at the end of time where the same kind of celebration will happen Revelation chapter seven verses nine and ten speak of this after this I looked and behold a great multitude!

that no one could number from every nation from all tribes and peoples and languages standing and before the Lamb clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb celebration this

celebration of the Messiah is driven by this sign that they finally recognize as undisputable and Jesus now not only embraces this title of Messiah this king who's come Hosanna he receives the worship and that is important for us to recognize here in John chapter 12 that Jesus does not protest Jesus receives this worship but it's also bound together with the statement he's just made in the presence of Lazarus that I am the resurrection and the life and Jesus will prove in just a few days from there that he in fact was this resurrection in the king and they don't understand necessarily what the cross is going to hold but at least for now in this moment they're celebrating Messiah as king they announce his victory before they understand the cost of that victory their celebration really in this moment is empty because they don't recognize the significance of what Jesus is about to do and that's why we find in the death of Christ so many are confused and while in Acts chapter 2 there are so few that remain these 120 believers out of the thousands and thousands of those who attested and celebrated him why they turn and say crucify him take him away their celebration was empty and ironically the act that was meant to silence the crowds and discredit the messianic claims to put Jesus to death and put Lazarus to death those things to help silence those crowds and to silence any evidence that was there to take it out of the way the very things that were meant to silence those crowds are the very things that give us reason to praise we praise a risen savior he is the resurrection the life because he had to die before he could prove his resurrection life and also invite us to experience that same resurrection in life through faith in him see

Jesus came to extend that resurrection life power and we're going to look at that next week and see the wonder of his resurrection and all that we can benefit from because of this obedient son obedient king coming into Jerusalem so the question that we finish with this morning is do you admire the son without coming to the savior are you admiring a king are you admiring a figure are you admiring someone who comes and fixes your problems but you don't really understand the significance and the depth of what Jesus came to do to seek and to save the lost and for him to seek and to save the lost you need to be one who admits that you're lost you need to be one who admits that you need saving you need to be one that admits that you are broken and you are out of fellowship with God that sin has separated us from God and so

Jesus comes Jesus comes to make a way for us to enjoy life life just like this resurrection life that Lazarus enjoyed he invites us to participate in through faith in Christ believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved as Acts chapter 2 verse 21 says and it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved have you come to a place not just in celebrating the work of Christ but coming to a place of worshiping the Savior let's pray Lord thank you for this triumphal entry thank you for the way that John captures this story to help draw attention not only to this procession that's taking place there in Jerusalem but more importantly a nation that is confirmed at least for the moment confirmed that the sign that you gave is convincing that it's indisputable

[37:15] Lord I imagine that many of us in this room have come to a place of seeing the glimpses of your son and have come to recognize the authority of your works have come to appreciate perhaps the your work in our lives in the answers that you give in terms of prayer but Lord I pray that we wouldn't just see you as this vending machine as it were but that we would come to worship the Savior we would lay down our lives for you and that we would learn to depend on you in every way that our faith in you would not be superficial like the believing in Jerusalem was on this triumphal entry and may our celebration not be temporary but it might be the kind of celebration we see in Revelation chapter 7 where standing around the throne are the nations and tribes and languages of people who have come to embrace the reality of the

Messiah and there they are standing before your throne celebrating and worshiping the Savior together may that be true of us as well we pray in Jesus name amen God bless you have a great week God bless God bless Thank you.