

# Prepare The Way For The King!

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Date: 29 October 2023

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. Please take your Bibles and open them up this morning to the Gospel according to John. And again, we'll be in John chapter 11, verses 55 through 12, 19.

If you didn't bring your own Bibles and you'd like to use the Bible in the pew back in front of you, you can find that on page 844. And if you're really using the Bible that I like, it's on page 1394.

We'll see who the overachievers are in the room this morning. John 11, 55 through 12, 19. When you found that in any Bible that you brought, if you would stand and follow along with me as I read the Word of God.

Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves.

They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all? Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know so that they might arrest him.

[ 1 : 17 ] 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 table.

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.

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, he who was about to betray him, said, Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor? He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief.

And having charge of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. Jesus said, Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.

When the large crowd of the Jews had 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 priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of him, many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

[ 2 : 33 ] 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 went out to meet him, crying out, 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 is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion. Behold, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt.

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. The crowd 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 had heard he had done this sign. So the Pharisees said to one another, You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.

This is the word of God. And please be seated. Lord, we thank you again for your word. It is unbelievably good.

[ 3 : 46 ] And we pray now that you would speak through me, a weak servant. Let your word go forth in power to accomplish your purposes. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. How do you welcome a king?

Five months ago, May 6, 2023, apparently was the coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla at Westminster Abbey. And to be completely honest with you, I was completely unaware and totally uninterested in the entire thing.

But I know that many people apparently get really into this stuff. And so they were eagerly anticipating and preparing for this moment. This was the first coronation of a king in 70 years. So you can imagine the preparation. They pulled out all the stops. The planning for this coronation began a year ago this month, October 2022. Invitations were sent out.

Some 2,200 guests would attend the ceremony with over 20 million Brits and over 10 million Americans watching the festivities online.

[ 4 : 52 ] Maybe some of you were included in some of those numbers. Every detail was laid out and planned out to honor and to praise and to welcome in the new king and his queen.

The Archbishop of Canterbury planned out a service, a coronation liturgy. And if you watched the event, then you saw one of the main features was the king's procession where the king and the queen traveled from Buckingham Palace into Westminster Abbey in the Diamond Jubilee State Coach.

It's this golden coach ornately decorated on all sides. It's led by six white horses surrounded on all sides by the king's guard.

They entered into the cheers and the celebration of the crowds and then they took their place and the moment came and the crown was officially placed on King Charles' head. But of course, that wasn't the end of the celebration.

There was a concert to attend that evening. There was a big feast, a dinner. They celebrated all weekend long. Everyone, all of this, celebrating all of it to welcome in a new king.

[ 6 : 04 ] Our passage this morning, it details the welcoming and the reception of a king. It's the entrance of King Jesus both into the home of his friends and into his city.

The time has come. All the grand entrance has been planned long in advance. The hour has arrived. And here we get to see how is this king received? How is the king welcomed?

And as we walk through this passage together, I want to ask us, I want us to ask ourselves, how do we receive the king? How do I welcome the king? How do I receive him even now?

How do I, how should I prepare for his arrival? What honor, what praise, what celebration is owed to King Jesus? And the truth is, we know this, don't we?

The king Jesus is worthy of everything that we have to offer. Amen? He is worthy of all of our honor, all of the praise, all of the glory, all of our energy, everything that we have to give him, all of ourselves.

[ 7 : 11 ] We're called to love the Lord your God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, all our strength. He's worthy of it all. So this morning, I want to ask the question, how should we receive the king?

And we'll see two ways to receive the coming king this morning. This is our outline if you're taking notes. Two ways to receive the coming king.

Receive him with honor and receive him with adoration. First, we see we are to receive the king with honor.

At the end of chapter 11, it sets the stage for us. Verse 55 tells us the Passover was at hand. This was the third Passover in the Gospel of John. This is Jesus' final Passover.

We know that Jews came from all over into Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. And they often came early to purify themselves for the feast. But this time, something was a little bit different, wasn't it?

[ 8 : 13 ] This time, they came looking for Jesus. We saw last week that a decision has been made. An infinitely, eternally foolish decision was made by Caiaphas and the chief priests and the Pharisees and the council to find Jesus and put him to death.

So this time, at the Passover, they're wondering, well, where is he? Where can we find him? They gave out orders that if anybody had seen Jesus, if anybody knew where he was, they might speak up so they might arrest him and ultimately so they might kill him.

But John tells us that while they are in Jerusalem preparing for Jesus' death, Jesus is in Bethany also preparing for his death. Bethany was about two miles away from Jerusalem.

And Jesus made a stop there to visit his friends, Mary and Martha and Lazarus, who John just casually mentions again that Jesus rose from the dead. He's still not giving us any information we

want to know about Lazarus.

We want to know what his experience was, what he's thinking, what his time was like in the grave. He doesn't focus on that at all, does he? Instead, the focus is on King Jesus and on how he is received.

[ 9 : 30 ] This is ancient history now, but I'll remind you that the Atlanta Braves won the World Series two, maybe three years ago. And they didn't win it in Atlanta, they won it in Houston.

They celebrated there in Houston. They had a big celebration. But do you remember how they were received when they arrived back home in Atlanta? There was a celebration. They got off the plane. It was crowded.

There were photographers, journalists, fans all over the place. They planned the celebration parade where they marched through the city of Atlanta as kings of the baseball world. All of this for being the best team in baseball.

Now imagine the honor that's owed to King Jesus. Place yourself in Martha's shoes or in Mary's shoes. This man just raised your brother from the dead.

How would you receive him? How would you honor him? Place yourself in Lazarus' shoes. This man just brought you out of the grave. How would you respond to him?

[ 10 : 29 ] We see like good Baptists, they fed him. I don't know what they ate. I imagine probably something like what we ate last week at the campsite. They fed him.

Martha served. Lazarus, he just wanted to spend his time with Jesus. He reclined there at the table with him. But the focus here, John's focus is on Mary and the way that she anointed and honored her king.

Look there to verse 3. John tells us, This is extravagant, sacrificial, self-debasing honor and love for the king.

Now we hear that term, pure nard. That really doesn't do anything for us, does it? But we need to understand that this was expensive.

And when John says that this was expensive ointment, he's kind of underselling it a little bit. This was incredibly expensive. Judas knows exactly how expensive it was, doesn't he?

[ 11 : 47 ] And we'll deal with him in a moment. But he tells us that they could have sold this ointment for 300 denarii. Now an average worker in this time might have earned one denarius per day.

So 300 denarii, not including Sabbaths and the weekends when you're not working. 300 denarii would have been a year's worth of labor for an average worker.

A full year's income. And here, Mary, she takes this valuable treasure off of the shelf, probably her most valuable possession. She takes it down, breaks it at the neck, and pours it out all over Jesus. This is extravagant, sacrificial love and honor. But not only this, John tells us he draws our attention to the fact that she anointed the feet of Jesus.

And she wiped his feet with her hair. This is humble, self-debasing, undignified honor. This is servant's work.

[ 12 : 56 ] Do you remember what John the Baptist said in chapter 1? He said, I'm not even worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of this man's sandals. Do you remember that?

This man, Jesus, is so much greater than I am. I'm nothing. I'm not even worthy to stoop down, to be the lowest servant, to serve this king, to do the lowest task imaginable.

I'm not worthy of him. He's worthy of everything I've got. But it's an honor to stoop down and be a servant for the king. That's Mary's posture here, isn't it?

She lets her hair down. She stoops down as low as she can. She doesn't care at all what anyone else in the room might think of her and what she's doing. And she gives her greatest treasure to honor her lord and king.

What an example this is for us, church. What an example Mary gives to us. Yes, this is extravagant.

[ 13 : 54 ] Yes, this is expensive. Yes, this is sacrificial. But isn't Jesus worthy of this? And so much more. Of course he is. He's worthy of our very best.

But Judas, excuse me, Judas. Judas didn't seem to think so, did he? Look there to verse 4. John tells us, Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, he who was about to betray him, said, Why was this ointment not sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor?

John tells us he said this not because he even cared about the poor, but why did he say it? He was greedy. He was a thief. He used to stick his hand in the money bag and pull out what he wanted for

himself.

He had charge of the money and he used that for his own personal gain. Judas was outraged because this expensive ointment, in his view, was being wasted by being poured out on Jesus instead of stuck in his pocketbook.

His money was being poured out all over somebody else's dirty feet. In his view, this was a waste. And Jesus said, no, no, no, no, no.

[15:04] Leave her alone. She has kept it. She has kept it for the day of my burial. The poor you will always have with you. There will always be an opportunity to serve the poor. But I have but one week left here with you.

One week left. She has saved this ointment for this purpose, to anoint me for my burial. I got an email from my seminary this past week, actually saying that they were honoring one of my former professors, honoring him with a festschrift.

Does anybody know what a festschrift is? I had no idea either. If they covered that in class, I missed that day. I had to look it up and see what a festschrift was. Apparently, it's German for a celebration writing.

Now, most of the time when a famous scholar, somebody influential, passes away, you'll see a lot of books come out honoring their work, giving honor to who they are, remembering the work and the influence that they had.

Well, a festschrift is a celebration writing while the person is still living. They want to show honor to them while they're around and can receive the honor. So they wrote this book in honor of this still living professor.

[16:18] Mary's doing the very same thing here. She says, well, why wait? She has an opportunity in front of her right now to honor the king of kings, and so she takes it. It's so interesting to me as I read through this section of John's gospel here that this story of Mary is sandwiched between Caiaphas in chapter 11 and Judas here in chapter 12.

Caiaphas, who wouldn't give up his status, wouldn't give up his prestige, wouldn't give up his influence. Instead, he plotted to take the life of Jesus and Judas, who didn't want to give up his greed, wouldn't give up his money, wouldn't give up his secret sin, and ultimately betrayed the Lord. And Mary honored the king. She poured it all out, but Judas and Caiaphas held on to what was more precious to them instead. Mary would give 300 days worth of income to honor the Lord. Judas would sell him off for 30 pieces of silver. I think we're meant to ask, are we honoring Jesus like Mary, or are we withholding honor from Jesus like Judas?

I'll ask that again. Are we honoring Jesus like Mary, or are we withholding the honor that he's due like Judas?

[17:50] Are we giving Jesus our very best? The best of our time, the best of our money, the best of our ability, the best of our possessions, because he is the most precious, the most worthy, he is the king, or are we holding back what is due to him because we find something else more precious than him?

Our prayer needs to be, God help us be like Mary. God help us, help us not be like Judas. The temptation for all of us, churches, is to hold back what's due to Christ because we want some sort of gain when in reality it all belongs to him.

I want people to look at us as a church family, people who don't know the Lord, to look at us the way we live, the way we serve, the way we give of ourselves, the way we give sacrificially and generously, and have no idea what in the world is going on.

And not understand it at all, because the truth is, when you give your best to Jesus, there will always be someone around who's going to think you're absolutely out of your mind.

And that's okay. Honoring Jesus, it often means giving generously in ways that don't make sense to the watching world. But what the world views as waste, God views as worship.

[19:28] And we had an Operation Christmas Child meeting a couple weeks ago, and this couple, we shared this last week, this couple was here, a man and his wife, pastor and his wife from Wild Peach, Texas, and they serve a small church there in Texas.

And they started off, the Lord led them to give the shoeboxes to Operation Christmas Child. I think they maybe had 12, 15 boxes the first go around, maybe 30, 35 a second go around, as they shared, their generosity and sacrifice blossomed to the point where this past year they gave over 5,000 shoeboxes.

And not just to provide supplies to these kids, but to provide the gospel to these kids. Because the Lord, the King of all the heaven and earth, is worthy of this sort of outrageous generosity, is He not? This church, you should know, is the fruit of extravagant, over-the-top, unreasonable generosity. This is our first year together as an autonomous church, but you should know that we're not yet financially self-sustaining, meaning, right now we are held up, we are propped up, we're supported by the generosity of other Christians who are using their money, the money that they could use to buy groceries, to pad their retirement, to do a thousand other reasonable things, but instead they see the work of God in you, the work of God in this church, who desire to see a healthy gospel witness established in this community, and have said the name and the honor of Jesus is worth it. So they give. We're indebted to their generosity. But our prayer, of course, our aim is that our dependence on that outside generosity would become less and less as our own hearts are stirred, our own membership grows to the point where we're no longer dependent on outside help, but rather, each one of us is giving in ways that might seem strange to the world, but that honor the Lord Jesus.

[ 21 : 42 ] I love the quote from Jim Elliott. Jim Elliott was a missionary, one of five missionaries who went to an unreached people group in the rainforest of Ecuador, went to bring them the message of the gospel.

Every single one of them was speared to death. Here's what he said. He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

I'll say that again. Make sure you heard it. He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

Jim Elliott gave his life. Why? Because he treasured and valued the honor and the glory of King Jesus more than his own life.

That's wasteful to the eyes of the world, but not to Christ. I hope the point is clear. This is not primarily about our money.

[ 22 : 50 ] This is primarily about our heart. This is about uprooting the idols of our heart, seeking out, asking the Lord to seek out areas where we are gripping tightly and by the grace of God, letting them go so we can honor King Jesus with everything we have.

Don't you want to do that for the Lord? Would you ask the Lord with me how he might have you, how he might have me, how he might have us together as a church to honor him extravagantly, sacrificially, generously, unexpectedly, and humbly in ways that you never thought possible for our good and his glory.

Receive the King with honor, but not just this. Second, how do we receive the King? Receive the King with adoration. Look there with me to verse 12.

John says, The next day, the large crowds that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 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. This is the arrival of the King. This is what's often called the triumphal procession.

[ 24 : 17 ] Typically, you hear this text preached on Palm Sunday. We're six months late or maybe five-ish months early, depending on how you're counting.

And this is the Sunday that begins the beginning of Holy Week and Jesus' road to the cross. You just imagine the scene. Place yourself there.

Millions of Jews are gathered here together for the Passover. They hear that Jesus is coming. I have no idea how many came out to meet him, but they came out of the city to usher in someone who they believed at this point not to just be a man, not to just be a teacher, not even just a miracle worker, but they came out to usher in who they believed to be their king.

Now, get this image in your mind. Thousands and thousands of Jews lining the street, picking up palm branches, waving them in the air. And this is a symbol of Jewish national pride and military victory.

It was a callback for them to the times of the Maccabees, restoring the temple and chasing out, driving out the Seleucids who ruled over them. It signaled for them a strong sense of hope and expectation that at last, finally, the moment has come.

[ 25 : 38 ] The king has arrived. The Messiah is here. And as they see him entering the streets, they quote the Psalms.

They shout out this roar of praise and adoration. Hosanna! Which means, save us now. Save us now. Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Even the king of Israel. They are adoring their king. They're welcoming him in with praise and with adoration.

They are claiming that this man, Jesus, is the Messiah. He's the king. That's been promised to the people. He's the one who will come and will reign and will rule. They believe that Jesus was their king.

The king had arrived. And he had. But, but, not as they might have expected.

[ 26 : 35 ] see, they, they were looking for a king who would come and rule right now. Save us now, they said. They were, they were looking for a great, mighty king to come in on a war horse, fully loaded, ready to, to take over, take down the Romans.

But instead, here comes Jesus, seated on a meager, young donkey. This is an interesting choice for a king, isn't it?

This is what our king arrives in. This, this is how our Messiah is going to come into the city. This is, this is the one who's supposed to come and kick out the Romans and set us free. This is our king. Thousands and thousands of years of waiting and this is how he rolls up into the city. This is like the king of England coming down the streets in some old minivan instead of this golden chariot.

You can imagine the confusion. What in the world is going on? John tells us he did these things fully self-aware.

[ 27 : 45 ] And what he's doing is in fulfillment of prophecy, just as it is written in Zechariah's prophecy, he says, Zechariah chapter 9, verses 9 and 10, Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion.

Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, your king is coming to you. He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey.

A colt, the foal of a donkey. Now the people wanted a king. They wanted military might strength, but this wasn't quite the king they expected.

This king is gentle and humble and lowly. So the crowds, they praised him and adored him, but we need to see they praised him for who they thought he was, not who he actually was.

They adored him, they praised him for who they wanted him to be, what they wanted him to do, what their hopes, their expectations, their agenda for King Jesus was, not for what he had actually come to do.

[ 29 : 03 ] Church, we ought to let this be a warning for us. We can voice praise and adoration for Jesus selfishly, can't we?

And we can serve him and adore him and shout out our Bible verses and honor him on our terms. He can be our king so long as he gives us what we want.

But if we want to receive the king truly in ways that honor him and please him and glorify the king, receive him for who he is.

Honor him, adore him for who he is. Let go of every other selfish agenda and receive the king with genuine heart adoration.

This is the king we've been waiting for. King Jesus, this is the one who's been promised to save us from our sins. This is the one promised to reign and to rule over us.

[ 30 : 03 ] The king of the Jews but not only the Jews. The king of any who trust him, love him, and come to him truly. How are we responding to Jesus?

See, these crowds, they didn't quite understand, did they? That this king had come to fight a much bigger battle than just a political battle.

This king had come to perform a much greater liberation than just to liberate the Jews from their enemies. He had come to conquer a much greater enemy than the Romans.

He'd come to meet much greater needs than they even knew that they had. This king had come to defeat the powers of sin and darkness. He had come to crush the head of the serpent, Satan.

He'd come to liberate all his people from the chains of sin. And in order to do this, he must come humbly to lay down his life to suffer and to die.

[ 31 : 15 ] Church, are you amazed by this? Well, this is why John, he says, the disciples didn't understand this at first. Only when Jesus had been glorified, only when he was resurrected, then they got it.

Then they saw this is who he was. This is why he came the way he did. Are you amazed by this? the king of kings, God himself, humbled himself, entered into our weakness, entered into our pain,

entered into our struggle to save unworthy sinners like us.

The one who's worthy of all praise, humbled himself to serve you, sparing no expense like Mary. He poured out the most precious gift he possibly could for you.

But where Mary poured out her treasure for the one who is worthy of all praise, the one who is worthy of all honor, Jesus poured out his greatest gift for those who are unworthy.

For sinners like me and like you, how do we respond to a king like this? We honor him. We adore him.

[ 32 : 37 ] And two more as we close. Bonus. We herald him and we anticipate him. You know what drew me as I studied this passage this week?

I've read this passage, I've studied it, who knows how many times, but you know what stood out to me more than anything this week? Do you know what drew the crowd to Jesus?

Look there at verse 17 and 18. What drew the crowds to Jesus? It says, the crowd 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 out to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. What drew the crowd to Jesus? What drew the honor to Jesus?

What drew the praise to Jesus? It was the witness of those who had experienced the work of Jesus. That's what drew the crowds. It was the heralding of the glory of Jesus out of the mouths of those who had seen it happen.

[ 33 : 48 ] Lazarus himself, the very existence of Lazarus, a resurrected man, brought honor and glory to King Jesus. The Pharisees heard he was still around. They wanted to kill him. Because everywhere he went, he brought a testimony of the life-giving power of King Jesus.

Church, have we not seen the work of Jesus? Have we not experienced the resurrecting life-giving power personally of the word of King Jesus?

Every one of us is living proof of the power of Jesus Christ. Do you want to bring honor and praise to the King? Bear witness to who he is.

Open up our mouths and proclaim the glory of the King. Open up our mouths and speak of what he's done for you, what he's done for us. Speak of his resurrection from the grave.

Herald the King. Bring glory to his name. And as we do, as we go about sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, anticipate his coming again.

[ 35 : 03 ] Jesus came the first time humbly to die for our sin, but he has promised church he will come again. Not to deal with sin, he's already done that, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

He will come again to finally defeat the enemy. Not on a donkey, but this time on a white horse. The first time he came to die, but when he returns he will come to reign forever with all those who trust in him.

And when he does, the whole world truly will go after him. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

The King will return. Are we ready to receive him? Are you ready to receive him?

Are you prepared for the coming of our King? Let's pray. Lord, come quickly Lord Jesus is our prayer.

[ 36 : 19 ] We long for the reign and rule of Christ. We look around and see how desperately we need you, how desperately we need your reign, your kingship, your lordship here and now.

Father, we pray that it would begin here with us. Reign and rule over us as your bride, as your church. Help us to honor you and to love you and to serve you as you deserve.

Help us to give generously, sacrificially of everything we have, Father, that you might be honored and your name proclaimed in all the earth. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.