

Jesus: Saviour and King!

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Preacher: Jonny Forsythe

[0 : 0 0] Right, so, I believe that the church were in a series in John, and today we're reading from! John chapter 12, verses 1 to 19. So, if you have a Bible with you, or you can listen to my lovely voice and try and work out where I'm from. Often people try and work out where I'm from. Some people get it, some people don't get it. So, at the end, you can... I've been seven different nationalities, I think, is the number I've got, too, so see what nationality you think. So, John chapter 12, reading from verse 1.

So, I'm reading from the NIV. Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here, a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard and expensive perfume. She poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected. Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages. He did not say this because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief.

As keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. 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. 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 on account of him, many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him. 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.

[2 : 1 8] At first his disciples did not understand all this. 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. 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. So the Pharisees said to one another, See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him.

When I first read that passage, when I was asked to share about it, I just asked God, okay, God, right, what do you want me to do with this? And God led me to one of my favorite books by one of my favorite authors, Philip Yancey, a book called *The Jesus I Never Knew*. I've been reading through that book. I really would recommend reading that book because it gives some amazing insights and I'm going to share some of those with us today. But also to really think about Jesus. And today I want us, Saturn Whitby in 2026, to just try and strip away all the, I don't know about you, but obviously over the years there's artwork, there's films that depict Jesus. And we can very easily get led down certain paths about what Jesus was like. But one of the things in the Gospels, it never mentions what Jesus looked like, never mentions it, what he actually looked like. So then when someone's asked to portray Jesus in a film, is he six foot, is he five foot, is he thin, is he, has he got a beard, what color was his skin, all that sort of stuff. And essentially that stuff doesn't really matter, really, however it all. But these things can really influence. And one of the thoughts that kept coming back to me was how we view Jesus impacts our relationship with him.

How we view him. Oftentimes if you go into a Catholic church, there'll be a statue of Jesus on the cross with the thorns on his head. When you look at that Jesus, to the Jesus that you see in artwork like carrying a baby lamb and this very, I'm trying to think of the right word, just serene and very

calm and very, is that what Jesus was like? Is that really what Jesus was like?

As we look through this passage, there's lots of little clues. And one of the things that Philip Yancey talks about is, is that God, and I think this is amazing, there's not a lot of detail in the scriptures about exactly what Jesus was like, about his family, about the scripture, what he looked like.

It's almost like God said, here you go, what do you think? And he's left it up to us. And actually, we'll come back to that in a minute, why that is so important. Why at times that can be frustrating, but why that's so important. There's a chapter before, chapter 11, Lazarus had died and Jesus brought him back to life. An amazing miracle for all those that witnessed that and heard about it.

[5 : 39] But at the same time, the chief priests had decided they wanted to get rid of him and Jesus had gone off, almost in hiding. But he didn't hide for very long. He came back and we're, this scene that we have, and in other gospels, it talks about this being at Simon the leper's home. Okay, often when you read this, it would appear to be at Lazarus' home, but actually the other gospels refer to the same event.

So can you imagine having a meal? One side of the table, you've got Simon the leper. Obviously, he's not a leper anymore because they wouldn't be with him if he still had leprosy. So he had been healed. And Lazarus, testimony night would have been quite interesting. How do you follow? Jesus healed me from leprosy. Jesus raised me from the dead. I was brought up in church and I'm sorry, everybody's testimony is valid. And sometimes I can relate more to the testimony of somebody who's been through church all their lives and God spoke to them through something rather than this dramatic, life-changing experience.

And then we have Mary and Martha. And I think sometimes we look at Mary and Martha and we make opinion or judgments of them that are quite unkind. I think sometimes when we look back at these stories, we know how it ends. We know what happens next. And it's really hard to actually imagine yourself in this scene, not knowing what's coming next. But the act of Mary was something which was unbelievable what she did. And something through the act that was an act of worship. And I think I'm sure in most churches, if someone decides to basically get rid of a year's worth of money. So we think about the budget of Whitby Christian Fellowship. A year's, so this money was the equivalent of a year's salary for somebody. And we, some of us might be on Judas' side here. That money could have been used to feed the poor. That money could have been used to, but why did Mary do it? And the thing is, because she knew who Jesus was and she knew what was going to happen to him. One of the most amazing things about the God that we believe in is that Jesus came to earth as king, but not as a king as we know it. We think of kings and we think of power.

[8 : 26] We think of, I think about the royal family and all the, you've got bodyguards, you've got all these different things. I was reading about when Queen Elizabeth visited America, obviously many years ago.

She had, she went to America with 4,000 pounds of luggage, two outfits for every occasion, one outfit in case somebody died while she was there. She had a hairdresser that went with her, two valets, 40 pints of plasma in case she needed it, and white leather toilet seats for when she needed to use a toilet.

Royalty. Now, Jesus, now this is something which we all know the Christmas story, we've read the Christmas story, and we, but I don't, it really didn't dawn on me until I read through this and with Philip Yancey's the way he put it, is God could not have chosen a more humiliating scene to introduce Jesus to the world. Even if you compare what happened with Jesus and with what happened with John the Baptist.

John the Baptist was born to Elizabeth, who God had healed so that she could bear a child. So there's all this excitement about this baby inside Elizabeth.

Jesus was born to a virgin who was a teenager. So the scandal of people in the community would have known that they weren't married, and this baby was growing, they could see this baby growing inside Mary.

[10 : 04] What did the neighbors think? What did the family think? John the Baptist's birth was met with excitement, with lots of, Jesus was born, wasn't even born in his hometown.

He wasn't born with lots of family around him. He wasn't even, he was born with more animals around him than humans. Think about today, I've got four children, so I've been in hospital for each of their four births.

Think about, I was trying to think of modern day equivalent of what that would look like. But even modern day, probably that pregnancy would have been aborted.

A teenager getting pregnant, out of wedlock, what would the family have said? Even if Mary had turned around and said, oh, the Holy Spirit got me pregnant.

Right, I think you need to go to the hospital. There's something not quite right there. Humiliating. Jesus was born, not with fanfares, not with gold, not with anything.

[11:12] He was born in as humiliating a scene as possible. And there's only one question that comes with that. Why? Why was he born like that? So that we could relate to him.

So that we could relate to him. If you think back to the Old Testament, especially Job, crying out to God, why have you allowed this? You don't understand.

You don't understand what it's like to be human. You don't understand. Jesus did. Philip Bianca tells the story of when he had tropical fish.

And he said he cared for these tropical fish. And he did everything he could for these tropical fish to make sure they were well. He fed them three times a day. He said he needed this laboratory of all the chemicals to make sure they had the right balance of everything they needed in a tank.

And he said every time he went to the tank to put something into it, the fish just hid from him. Even though he was trying to help them. Even though he was trying to help.

[12:12] And Philip Bianca concluded the only way he could relate to those fish is if he became one and was in the tank with them and told them that this medicine was good for them.

Reminded me of growing up on a farm with sheep and we would have to give the sheep medicine.

And it was a nightmare trying to grab these sheep. If you're trying to say, oh, this is for your good.

They're like, no way. I don't want anything to do. But in the same way, how can we relate to God?

How can we relate to Jesus if they don't know what it's like to be a human?

And that's what Jesus did. He came to earth so each of us could have that relationship with him.

And I believe for somebody today, for some people today, even on Father's Day, God sent his son for each one of us in here.

He became nothing so that we could have a relationship with him. And the Bible, in its essence, is a love story. God's love for us.

[13:17] Up until this point, the relationship with God was based on fear. You couldn't even look at him. You couldn't go into the temple. There was an inner court.

You couldn't go into that place. God realized, God knew he had to find a different way to have a relationship with him.

And if you think about other religions around the world today, none of them are based on a relationship with the creator, with the God, whichever way you want to put it. You think about Muslims who have to put their forehead on the ground to show respect for Allah.

Think of other religions where it's based on sacrifice. They have to sacrifice something before they can come into that place of being with the gods. But we have this way of approaching God.

And I think sometimes we take that for granted. Sometimes we take that for granted. What God did for us. But the other thing as well, and one of the things that I believe God wants us to say today, is take it right back to the basics of biblical study.

[14:21] What does it teach us about God? What does it teach us about us? And what do we do about it? So what do we do about this? What do we do about the fact that God sacrificed everything for us?

We should sacrifice for him. Now for each of us, that looks different. For each of us, that looks very different. And that comes back to Mary. Like Mary sacrificed, gave up that year's worth of salary for Jesus.

Because he was worth it. She recognized who he was. And that anointing, in the other gospels, talks about that she poured it on his head.

And it went straight down over his body. For Mary as well, there was that sense. It was like unknown of for Jewish women to untie their hair. For her to wipe his feet with her hair was very degrading for her.

But she did that to sacrifice for him. Who would we have been on the side of if we were in that room?

[15:33] Judith? Think about all the church programs that money could have been used for. We could have done this. We could have done that. We could have done that outreach. We could have built that extra bit onto the church.

We could have fixed the roof. We could have done all this sort of thing. It's not an easy one. We can be very critical of characters in the Bible without really understanding.

One of the other things that, when we think about King, and obviously later on in the passage, it talks about Jesus coming in and being greeted as a king.

And this is the thing that goes with this sense of Jesus become nothing. One of the things which is incredible, as you learn more about God, learn more about Jesus, is what one author talks about as the miracle of restraint.

The miracle of restraint. When you read through the story of Jesus, his life, when he was tempted in the desert, he was given, he was tempted to basically show his power.

[16 : 45] The first song that we sang, where it said, you place the stars in the sky. You told every lightning bolt where it should go.

The God who can do that, chose to come as a baby. Chose to be reliant on humans for his food, for his security, for everything that he needed.

But then as he got older, God could have wiped out Satan like that, clicked with his fingers. But he didn't. In this story with these chief priests, God could have clicked his fingers and they all got zapped just like that.

But why didn't he do that? It all comes back to relationship. If you're in a relationship with somebody who can strike you down for no apparent reason, the relationship is not going to be based on love. It's going to be based on fear. And God had to find a way where the relationship was based on intimacy. The people that Jesus spent time with, who knew him, knew what he was like.

[17 : 56] Knew his passion. Knew that he could be moved to tears. One of the last weeks I read, listened to John's message last week. And that really short verse, which says so much about God.

Jesus wept. He wept. Why? Because he's like you and me. Because he has those emotions. He has that. He's moved by what he sees. He's not. If you think about what happened to John. I often think about when John the Baptist was beheaded. And Jesus straight after that does a miracle.

And I'm thinking, he must have just wanted to go and hide away for days. But yet, what he went through, and he did it for you and for me.

He has that restraint for you and for me because he wants that relationship with us. This is what Philip Yancey says.

[18 : 59] The more I get to know Jesus, the more impressed I am by what? Somebody else called the miracle of restraint. The miracle Satan suggested, the signs and wonders the Pharisees demanded. The first final proofs I yearned for, these would offer no serious obstacle to an omnipotent God.

More amazing is his refusal to perform and to overwhelm. God's terrible insistence on human freedom is so absolute that he granted us the power to live as though he did not exist.

To spit in his face, to crucify him. All this Jesus must have known as he faced down the temperature in the desert, focusing his mighty power on the energy of restraint. God says, you choose to each of us today.

And for some of us in this room today, we have faced with that decision today. What choice do we make? Because we have choices. The fact that you're here, listening, hopefully, to what I'm saying, means that you're hearing about a God that loves you.

You're hearing about a God that wants a relationship with you. What you do with that, and this is the most amazing thing about God, is up to you. It's up to me, what I do with that. I can choose to ignore it and say, oh, that's not important.

[20 : 15] Don't need to worry about that. I can use to do something with it. And I urge you that a life with Jesus is not the easiest life, but it's the most blessed life that we can have.

Jesus came as a king to the earth. But he came to serve.

And shortly after this passage that we have in John, is we have Jesus washing the disciples' feet.

And I believe that as the church, God wants each of us to serve.

And I believe today he wants to challenge each of us in how can we serve him. It might be through the job that you do. I have the privilege of working alongside young offenders in Wetherby prison, young men who have done horrible things.

And I believe that God wants me there to teach them this message that God loves them, no matter what they've done. Some of them are in for murder, are away for 15, 16 years of their lives.

[21 : 24] I'm sat in the classroom with them on my own, talking to them about Jesus. I get more opportunity of talking to them about Jesus in a prison set or a prison classroom than I did in a classroom in a state school.

What do those lads need to know? That God loves them unconditionally, no matter what they've done. What do we need to know? That God loves us unconditionally, no matter what we've done. How are we serving God in our local community, where we're placed, in here, in Wipby Christian Fellowship? If you're visiting, wherever you're from, how can God, and ask God the question. If you ask God the question, he will happily give you an answer. God, how can I serve you? We ask God that question, and he said, I want you to go to Mexico. We also ask God the question, was it time to come home from Mexico?

And he said, yes. But he said, I want you still to be part of it. I believe that Jesus, if he was here today, would want to spend time with each one of us.

[22 : 34] We want to get to know us, to know all about us, to ask us how we're doing. He cares about every single aspect of our lives. And what he wants from us in return is to worship him.

What that looks like for each one of us is different. Being here on a Sunday is part of that. Giving money and offering is part of that. How we use our time. The friendships that we have. The work that we do. Spending time with our neighbours. So just, in summary, I just want us to spend a moment in silence.

I've shared a lot today. Take away the bit that's from me and listen to the bit that's from God. What's God saying to you today? Ask him the question.

God, what is it you want me to take away from today? What do you want me to do, to not do in that, whatever it might be? Ask him the question. He might not give you the answer in this minute that we're going to have.

[23 : 42] But keep asking him that question. He will show you. And if you're not sure, if God said something to you, you feel God's put this in your heart and you've got people around you that you trust, ask them, will you pray for me?

I believe God said this to me. When we felt God was calling us to Mexico, we spoke to Anne and Fiona, who we trusted them implicitly and said, will you pray for us? Because we feel God's asking us to do this.

And they prayed for us along with the church. And we ended up in Mexico. So this, we're church family, can really help one another. So let's spend a moment just in prayer.

Father, on this Father's Day, we're reminded of your love for us. That love which cost you greatly to send your son to earth to die for each one of us.

Father, help us to respond to that love in the only true way it deserves, which is by loving you, by serving you, by living for you.

[24 : 49] And Father, I pray for each of us today that you will have put stuff on our hearts that will help us to be more like you, to live a life where you're at the center, to live a life where we look out for the needs of others, where we show love.

And Father, we just ask that you will just bless this church and every person who's here today.

Bless their families. Pray for those today who is a tough day, might be the first Father's Day without their dad.

That you will just give them extra comfort today. And we ask this in your name. Amen. Amen. Amen.