

The Humble & Victorious King

John 12:12-19

A few years ago Bethany and I watched a movie that told the story of an assassination attempt on the President of the United States. The interesting thing about this particular movie is that the entire movie went over the same few minutes of time surrounding the event, but each portion of the movie was shown from a different characters vantage point. When the first vantage point is given you have some idea of what is going on, but you have lots of questions. As each successive viewpoint is laid out you gather more information and get a fuller picture of the story. You can start to fit the puzzle pieces together.

I think that is a perfect description of what is happening when we read the 4 gospels. Each gospel gives a vantage point on Jesus and His work. It's vital to let each viewpoint stand on its own, but the viewpoints will never contradict each other and when put together they provide a full and beautiful picture of the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth.

Today I want you to open to the Gospel of John and we are going to study the triumphal entry of Jesus together. What's interesting is that in our study of the gospel of Mark we studied this scene not terribly long ago, just back in October. The triumphal entry is one of the only stories covered in all 4 gospels and so we have a fascinating perspective on it as we compare and contrast the way each gospel writer tells the story.

So, today as we look at John 12:12-19 and the triumphal entry in preparation for Easter, we are going to see that like Mark, the triumphal entry puts the kingship of Jesus on display for us, but that John does it in a unique way by emphasizing the responses various groups had to Jesus. So, we'll see **3 responses to the kingship of Jesus that clarify our responsibilities as disciples.**

1. Recognize His Kingship (vv. 12-15)

We can't know what it looks like to be His follower unless we recognize Jesus as King and then understand the type of King He is. When you begin to read the story of the triumphal entry in verse 12 it's apparent that you are jumping into the middle of a story already being told. John more than any other gospel writer wants us to see the triumphal entry and the responses to it as part of a larger

story. What larger story? To answer that we have to ask what “large crowd” this is that is mentioned in verse 12. To answer that question, look up to verses 9-11. So, we find out that people are coming to see Jesus, but they are also gathering to see Lazarus. Well, who was Lazarus? We won’t read the entire story but go back this afternoon and read all of John 11 for the story of Lazarus.

He and his sisters were close friends of Jesus and he got sick and died and was buried. After he had been dead for 4 days Jesus miraculously called him out of the grave by the power of his voice and he literally came back to life. Now, it’s hard to remain neutral when a guy who has been dead for 4 days comes out of the grave still wrapped up in his grave clothes. What was the response? Look at 11:45-46. This apparently happened somewhat close to the Passover. Look at 11:55-57. Excitement was high, and tensions were high because of what had happened and this explains what we saw in verses 9-11 leading up to verse 12.

So, when we read verse 12 we are dropping into an emotionally charged situation. People who are trying to get a glimpse of Lazarus find out the guy who raised Lazarus from the dead is making his way toward Jerusalem. So, they go out to meet him and welcome him into the city as a victorious hero. Look at verse 13.

We associate palm branches with the triumphal entry because of this passage but understand that palm branches were a national symbol for Israel. It would be like Americans lining the streets and waving American flags and setting off fireworks while wearing statue of liberty hats. They are filled with national pride and look what they shout in the rest of verse 13.

Hosanna means “give salvation now” and this phrase “blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” is taken from Psalm 118. This Psalm presents the King of Israel as entering back into Jerusalem after winning a victory and coming into the Temple to worship there. The portion the people shout is taken from the congregational response to the King in Psalm 118. In the Psalm the people are welcoming the King as their victorious leader. Notice that they add something at the end of the phrase that is not found in Psalm 118, “the King of Israel.”

The people are clearly thinking of Jesus as a national, political leader and are hoping he will enter the city and kick out the Romans. After demonstrating the power over death, why would they not expect that? So, the crowds rightly

identify Jesus as King, but they fail to properly understand his kingship. Verses 14-15 come as quite a juxtaposition to verse 13. Look there.

John doesn't go into great detail and give the background of Jesus obtaining the donkey like we saw in Mark. He just wants you to know that Jesus rode a donkey. Why? Jesus is not denying his kingship and the fact that he is messiah, but by choosing a donkey he is making a statement about what kind of King He is and that is spelled out with the fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9 in verse 15. He is a humble king who will not enter the city with military might. His authority does not come through worldly power but through humble service.

The fact that Jesus is this type of king will have massive implications for his followers. This posture of humble service and self-sacrifice must become the primary disposition of those in his kingdom. In the very next chapter Jesus clearly shows his disciples what this looks like. Look down at 13:1-5. Now look down to verses 12-17. According to Jesus finding true purpose and meaning in life comes from giving of my life to serve others. This view of life stands in virtually direct opposition to our current cultural climate.

One philosopher has deemed our age the Age of Authenticity. What does he mean by that? People today view the purpose and meaning of life as finding my true self and living out that personal identity. The goal is to be authentic to who you truly are. You and I are bombarded by this worldview all the time. Don't think that because you're here at church that you have somehow avoided imbibing this view of life. We often think of church as something that is really about my individual needs and preferences being met. I prefer this style of music or this program and I'm here to have my itch scratched.

Jesus challenges this radically self-centered way of living by showing his disciples that true life consists in sacrificial service of others. My goal is God's glory and the good of my neighbor and I pursue those realities. Then, it's amazing how satisfaction and joy come as a result. The entire life and ministry of Jesus models an others centered way of living and we can hardly claim to know the kingship of Jesus and live out the expressive individualism of the culture. But recognizing the humble kingship of Jesus isn't the only response called for.

2. Understand His Enthronement (v. 16)

It's clear from verse 16 that the disciples didn't fully understand what was going on in the triumphal entry. They obviously knew something significant was happening, but they don't realize the full impact in the moment.

But they will. When? Continue reading in verse 16. When was Jesus glorified? Well, this isn't the only time in John's gospel that we have the disciples NOT grasping the events as they were unfolding and only later circling back around and getting them. Listen to John 2:22 after Jesus performed his first sign, the wedding at Cana and cleansed the Temple. So, the glorification is when Jesus is raised from the dead and enthroned as King.

After the triumphal entry Jesus explains how this glorification will come about. Look at 12:23-24. So, Jesus is glorified by dying and rising from the dead. When this happens, the disciples are finally able to see the scope of Jesus' work and begin to put it all together. Notice that once the resurrection happened the disciples were able to begin piecing two things together according to verse 16.

In other words, they looked back at the OT and begin to put it side by side with the events in the life of Jesus and it was like lightbulbs going on. I don't know if you've ever watched a movie with an ending you didn't see coming, a surprise. When you go back and watch the movie again, you see that the surprise was there all along, you just didn't have eyes to see it. But now you watch the movie in a different and clearer way. That's what it must have been like for the disciples after Jesus rose for the dead and that's certainly what it should be like for us now as we read the OT and see the life of Jesus.

But it's because of his enthronement through his death and resurrection that we eagerly participate in our 3rd response here.

3. Proclaim His Worldwide Glory (vv. 17-19)

We saw earlier how closely connected the triumphal entry of Jesus was to the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Keep in mind 11:45 that many people believed in him and many people, according to 12:9, went to find Lazarus and see a man who had been dead and now lived.

What is your first response when you see something amazing or astounding? You want to find someone to share it with or tell about what you have seen. I have this annoying habit of finding strange and I think objectively funny videos on

YouTube and telling Bethany, you've got to see this. When something excites you, it's natural to try and share that with others. **If you were at the tomb of Lazarus and you watched Jesus speak, and Lazarus walk out of that tomb, you would hardly be quiet about it.** Look at verse 17. They bore witness. This means that they testified to what they had seen. **This word is used of the ministry of John the Baptist regarding Jesus.** What is the result of these witnesses simply talking about what they had seen? Look at verse 18.

So, we find out that the crowd in verse 12 had heard about the raising of Lazarus and based on that testimony they went out to see him and it brought about this whole triumphal entry scene. Word is spreading fast.

But of course, if you remember, the crowds weren't the only ones who knew about the raising of Lazarus. We saw earlier how the Pharisees actually wanted to put Lazarus to death because people were believing in Jesus as a result of his being raised from the dead. Well, when the triumphal entry happens, and people are proclaiming Jesus king and word is spreading and people are talking about a king who raises dead men to life, you get verse 19.

Now, let's draw our attention to the last phrase of the Pharisees there, "the world has gone after him." Obviously, the Pharisees are expressing frustration here, but I think John would have us read this with a touch of beautiful irony. What do I mean? **Let me show you where John has used irony in the speech of those who hate Jesus before to make a true point about Jesus.** Listen to this little anecdote from John 11:47-53. Caiaphas spoke better than he knew, and I think that same thing is happening here with the Pharisees and it's the same message that Caiaphas accidentally proclaimed.

John spells it out for us in verses 51-52. **The Pharisees are frustrated, but they are ultimately right.** The entire world will go after him. People from every tongue and tribe and nation will enter the kingdom of God. **But here's what's even more beautiful about what the Pharisees say.**

This word "world" is used in a very unique way by the Gospel writer John. We tend to think about this word as indicating the bigness of the world. **But in John, this word speaks more to the badness of the world.** The world, according to 1 John, same author, is that system that is opposed to God. Listen to 1 John 2:15-16. It's when human beings come together out of rebellion against God and try to

live together apart from God's authority. This is what happens at the tower of Babel in Genesis 11.

The most famous verse in the Bible, John 3:16, has a different emphasis in most of our minds. We think John means that God so loved the scope or the bigness of the world, but what John is actually saying is that God loved the world, even though it's filled with people in rebellion against him.

I think here the Pharisees are annoyed that Jesus is gaining more and more people, but I think ultimately in the Gospel of John their words tell us the heart of the very reason that Jesus came to die. He didn't come to just save a lot of people, although in Revelation we find a multitude that no man can number around the throne. John wants us to know that Jesus came to save sinful people. He came to save people who are self-centered and self-loving.

He came to die for people who could not redeem themselves and this is a truth worthy to be believed and proclaimed.

So many people think that religion is about being a good person. But the beginning of a true relationship with God is recognizing that you can't be a good person. It's understanding that we are all broken and twisted by sin. But true faith is looking to the God who sent His son Jesus Christ, to die on behalf of sinful people who could not save themselves.

We talk about the gospel a lot around here and I use that word gospel fairly regularly. But I want to make sure you understand what I mean when I say it. The gospel is the good news that you and I aren't good enough, but Jesus came to pay the penalty for your sins, win the victory over sin and death, and give us eternal life with God. The gospel is something you believe in, not work for. It's a gift of grace when God opens your eyes to the beauty of Jesus Christ.

It's a gift given to worldly, sinful, and broken people by the King of everything. So, this morning, if you have never recognized your own sinfulness and turned from your sin to Christ in faith and fallen on his grace as your only possible salvation, please consider the good news of the gospel. But if you have had your sins forgiven, then one appropriate and fitting response to something of this magnitude is to do exactly what the crowds did. Bear witness to His glory so that other sinful people can know Him too.

