

SEE, YOUR KING IS COMING

John 11:55-12:19

Key verse: 12:15, "Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt."

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. It was the last of Jesus' 7 miraculous signs recorded in John's gospel. Let's review the 7 signs: (1) Jesus turned water to wine. (2) Jesus healed a royal official's son. (3) Jesus enabled an invalid man to walk. (4) Jesus fed a crowd of over 5000 people with 5 loaves and 2 fish. (5) Jesus walked on water. (6) Jesus enabled a blind man to see. And, (7) Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. These 7 signs show not only what Jesus can do, but also who he is. The raising of Lazarus shows Jesus' almighty power over death. Jesus gives life to the dead. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. Do you have any dead or dying elements in your life? I had to bring some of my unbelief and fatalism to the Lord in prayer, confessing: "Lord Jesus, you are the Giver of Life. You give life to the dead. There is nothing impossible for you. Forgive my unbelief. Forgive me that I want to give up when things look dead or dying. But you give life to the dead. I trust in you. Come give life, Lord Jesus. Amen."

Today's passage includes two events: Mary anoints Jesus' feet with an expensive perfume, and Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey's colt. These two events don't seem to be related. But they are. Let's learn about Jesus' amazing love and his kingship.

I. "You will not always have me" (11:55-12:11)

It was about one week before the Jewish Passover, one of the three great holy days which drew many Jews to Jerusalem. Many people went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. In the temple courts, they kept looking for Jesus asking one another, "What do you think? Isn't he coming to the festival at all?"

Jesus was a controversial figure. He was popular with the people. But the leaders hated Jesus, and regarded him as a serious threat to their position, their power and even to the society. In fact, the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that anyone who found out where Jesus was should report it so that they might arrest him. If Jesus had wanted to save himself, he would have avoided coming to Jerusalem. But Jesus' aim was not to save himself. It was to glorify God, saying and doing what God his Father wanted.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. A dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus reclined at the table with Jesus. Then Mary came and poured about a pint of pure nard on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. Pure nard was a very expensive perfume. It's estimated worth was 300 days' wages. At the current minimum wage, that's about \$30,000. What would you do with an extra \$30,000? Many people would buy a nice new car. Some would put it towards a house down-payment or mortgage payoff. Some would use it for their children's tuition or school loan debt. Some might go on an

extravagant family vacation to an exotic island, like Fiji or New Zealand. But Mary gave it to Jesus, pouring it on his feet and wiping his feet with her hair.

Why would she do this? After all, it surely was not Jesus' custom to wear perfume. Obviously, it was a lavish expression of love and thanks to Jesus. She was so thankful to Jesus for raising her dead brother Lazarus to life again. She was so thankful to Jesus for giving her the hope and promise of eternal life. Jesus was all the world to her. She knew she'd rather have Jesus than anything this world could offer her.

Have you ever done anything extravagant for Jesus?

The Taj Mahal is regarded as one of the wonders of the world. It was built in India by an emperor as a mausoleum for his third wife, who died while giving birth to his fourteenth child. It took 22 years to build with 20,000 laborers, 1000 elephants hauling supplies, and white marble and gem stones imported from as far as China. It costed an estimated \$1 billion to build. This was a gift from an emperor to his dead wife. What a lavish gift! And she couldn't even say, "Thank you!"

King David had it in his heart to build a magnificent temple for the Lord his God. But it was his son Solomon whom God allowed to build it. Still, David designed it, inspired by God, and offered much of his own wealth to support its construction. This was one way that David expressed his love for God. He also wrote many psalms as poems, prayers and songs to God.

This week some of our church children sold lemonade in order to make enough money to help some of their friends to come to their summer Bible conference retreat. It was a beautiful use of their time, and a beautiful expression of love for their friends.

I'm a frugal person. The problem is that this can degenerate into stinginess. For example, I'd rather pick up a pizza, taking 15 minutes, instead of paying \$7 to have it delivered. But yesterday someone mindfully had it delivered for a meeting so I could devote more time to preparing this message. So I was thankful to his mindful person. Probably you can guess who it was.

Of course, the greatest, most valuable gift we can give to the Lord is not our money but our lives. A profound influence on my early Christian life was the Christian musician Keith Green, who died at age 29 at the height of his Christian music career. His songs emanated fervent love for Jesus and rebuke of lukewarm faith. Listen to some words from his song, "To Obey Is Better Than Sacrifice":

"To obey is better than sacrifice, I don't need your money I want your life, And I hear you say that I'm coming back soon, But you act like I'll never return....To obey is better than sacrifice, I want more than Sunday and Wednesday nights, Cause if you can't come to Me every day, Then don't bother coming at all."

Does your love for Jesus show in your life—in your words, in your actions, in your use of money?

Mary's love for Jesus was oozing on the floor, dirtying her hair, and filling the house with the aroma. But not everyone was impressed. In fact, Judas Iscariot objected openly, saying: "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a

year's wages." Actually, what Judas said sounds reasonable. I mean, that much money spent to give Jesus' feet a sweet smell, does seem, by all economic standards, unnecessary, wasteful and a poor use of that treasured perfume. She poured out a pint. She could've just used a few drops. The author however commented about Judas: "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." So his intention was not to help the poor, but to help himself.

This is the danger of the health and wealth gospel. Are we following Jesus to get a better life in this world? In some sense, we all are. We all expect more peace, more joy, more love, and more hope, in following Jesus. So it is a better life to follow Jesus, but not necessarily by worldly standards. We may not have more money or more vacations or more supporters as we follow Jesus. We will probably not be more popular with all people as we follow Jesus. Apostle Paul wrote, "If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Gal 1:10). Judas thought that by following Jesus, he could get ahead in the world. When he saw that this hope was fading away, he turned against Jesus. Judas saw Mary's act as foolish because he didn't love Jesus as she did. He was just using Jesus for his own benefit. Those who follow Jesus like this, are in grave danger of betraying Jesus, like Judas Iscariot.

How did Jesus view Mary's act? Listen to Jesus in verses 7-8.

"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." Of course, Jesus cared about the poor. There will always be poor people. That's a sad but true socio-economic reality. So we should be mindful of the poor. But there is also a right time to do something out of love for Jesus. Mary knew this time was right.

Jesus accepted her act of love. Jesus mentioned two things: his burial and not always being there. Jesus was going away soon. Actually his death was less than one week away. Some of them may have sensed this. Mary might have sensed it. Jesus foretold it at least three times, according to the other gospels. Jesus accepted Mary's perfume as an anointing of his dead body, in advance.

Mary's pouring out her precious perfume was a foreshadowing of Jesus pouring out his precious blood for us, as his greatest expression of love for God and for us. Eternal thanks and praise to Jesus, who shed his blood for us, to wash away our sins as the Lamb of God!

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. They were so evil and murderous.

II. "Blessed is the king" (12:12-19)

The next day the great crowd that had come for the Passover 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!”

“Hosanna!” was a Hebrew expression of praise that meant, “Save now!” What were they hoping and expecting to be saved from? We get a hint from their other words: “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!” The crowds quoted Psalm 118, which is a psalm of triumph over enemies. One repeated phrase in the psalm is: “in the name of the LORD I cut them down,” as the triumph of God’s people over their enemies. It is clear that the people were hoping and expecting that Jesus would be pronounced king and then proceed to use his divine rule to throw off their Roman oppressors. They were expecting Jesus to be their political king who would bring peace on every side, like King David did. But that is not the kind of king Jesus came to be.

Jesus proceeded to show the shouting crowds what kind of king he came to be in verses 14-15: 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.” Here we learn several things about King Jesus.

First, King Jesus is the Promised Messiah. Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 when he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey’s colt. From the time of Genesis, God made promises to his people that he would send a Savior, a Deliverer, who would crush the serpent’s head. The serpent is the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. The devil is our true universal enemy, the enemy of all humankind. The devil is a liar and a murderer. Jesus came to destroy the devil’s work. Jesus came to deliver us from the power of sin and death and condemnation. Jesus came to bring us salvation and eternal life. Jesus came to make us heirs of his kingdom as children of God. Zechariah, who lived several hundred years before Jesus, foretold of this Messiah King. He wrote, “See, your king is coming.” This Promised Messiah and King is Jesus Christ.

Second, King Jesus drives out fear. “Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion.” Daughter Zion is a nickname for Jerusalem, which was built on Mount Zion. So it means, “Don’t be afraid, people of God.” God’s people need not fear. There are many things that make us afraid. On a national or global scale this could be war, famine, or disasters. On a personal scale, this could be loss of finances or health or peaceful relationships. Yet the greatest fear we all must face is the fear of death. The devil holds people in the fear of death. Hebrews 2:14-15 says, “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” In Jesus, we have victory over the fear of death, for he is the Resurrection and the Life. He is our Savior King who rescues us from the fear of death. Jesus Christ is our hope and peace.

Third, King Jesus is our humble King of peace. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey’s colt. A snorting stallion was the symbol of war and conquest. No one rides into battle on a donkey’s colt. Rather, a donkey’s colt represents humility and peace. Jesus did not come with a sword to strike terror in his enemies. This is the way of the world from the beginning of human history. World history is largely domination and death by the sword and guns. But Jesus conquers the world not by brute force but by love and

self-sacrifice. Jesus defeats the devil with his perfect obedience to the Father to die on the cross for our sins. Jesus came into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey's colt. We call it the Triumphal Entry. It was triumphant, not because he killed people, because he didn't. Rather, Jesus triumphed over the devil through his obedience to the Father's will. He triumphed by his perfect love for God and love for us. Praise Jesus our Wonderful Savior and King!

Jesus' 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.

Many people wanted to meet Jesus because of the miracle regarding Lazarus. So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!" They were so blinded by their love of the world that they couldn't recognize Jesus as their promised Messiah and King. May none of us be so foolish.

As I reflected on this passage, I thought a lot about Mary's giving to Jesus, as her expression of thanks and love to Jesus. I was reminded of several people who gave up precious things to follow and serve Jesus. One young man gave up his dream to be a grocery store manager in order to serve others as a campus Bible teacher and shepherd. Another gave up his dream to be a broadcast news anchorman. Still another gave up her dream to do research at a prestigious Ivy league school to stay in Chicago and serve God's people and flock in Chicago. I remember one missionary, before his conversion, wanted to build a robot to destroy the world. What a terrible goal! By the grace of Jesus, he became a man of peace and grace. He liked to introduce himself to college students as a Bible teacher for college students. King Jesus is worthy of our gifts, and sacrifices, and our lives.

Today we thought about Mary's extravagant love for Jesus, and Jesus' extravagant love for the Father and for us. We also thought about Jesus' kingship: he is the Promised Messiah, who saves us from fear and gives us salvation and peace. May we give our hearts and lives to Jesus our Savior and King, for he is worthy of our best love.

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