

A HIDDEN KINGDOM

NOVEMBER 27, 2022 | WALKING WITH JESUS | JOHN 12:12-26 | PASTOR SCOTT TURANSKY

[PRAYER] Lord, I want to pray especially for a few people today. I pray for Connie Gross, who's in the hospital with a potential blood clot issue. We ask that you would heal her. Our hearts go out to Harold Munro, who's here today, and his son Bobby. We know that that funeral this week will be a special one just because we love Vivian so much. The same with Lorraine and the funeral for Terry Brown this week as well. Lord, you know, every one of our needs and challenges. We're here because it's an encouragement to be with other believers. In the challenges that we face and the joys that we experience, we come before you and experience your grace in our lives. We need that today. We know we find a special grace as we open your word. So as we do that, Lord, would you please speak to us and teach us through it? In Jesus' name, amen.

Imagine being a disciple, maybe Peter or Andrew or James or John, and the resurrection is taking place. Jesus ascended into heaven and you're kind of lying there on your bed sometimes, and you go, "Whoa, do you remember what He did then? Oh, now I remember why He did that." Particularly while you were sitting in church. These guys sat in church then afterwards or participated in church services. And mostly they read the Old Testament. They'd come across a verse and they'd go, "Oh, that ties right into Jesus. Wow, this is amazing." That's what we're going to see today as John tells us that, that we didn't realize these things that were going on until later and we recognize how valuable and important they were.

Today we're going to look at the story of the triumphal entry. A famous story. Usually we talk about it at Easter, not at Christmas. But we're going to look at that story today because that's where we are as we're going verse by verse through this passages in John 12. So in John 12:13 we're going to look at the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ, a story that's told in all four gospels. Every one of the gospel writers want us to know there's something in this story you don't want to miss. I think it's the wow factor. Because they realize that this coming, this presentation of Jesus coming into Jerusalem is powerful, it's significant. And there's some wows attached to it. We're going to get into those in just a moment.

Let's read this. Would you please stand with me as I read John 12:12-16.

It says this: *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 (which means save us)! 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.

Fascinating. You may be seated.

I just imagine them sitting in church and they're reading through a passage of scripture. They go, "Whoa, those are the same things that we saw in Jesus' life." It all starts to connect the dots. So the gospel writers include a number of prophecies that help us see what's taking place in the Old Testament, how it's connected to the New Testament. Let's go back to this passage and look at it from the beginning.

It says – *The next day* (this is the day after that big dinner they had in honor of Jesus that we talked about last week) *the large crowd that had come to the feast...* Now this is the feast talking about Passover. Passover is one of the three feasts that people would come to Jerusalem. There's a pilgrimage. You would come if you lived in Africa. You wouldn't be saying, "Oh, I can't go to the feast this year. Maybe I'll go to the next one." If you're a Jewish person scattered throughout all of the world, you would say, "I want to go back. I know that I should go to Jerusalem. I would like to do that." So if you lived in Asia, you'd want to come back if you could. If you could work it out to come back. So people were from all over the place coming to the feasts.

There was a large crowd there and they *heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem*. The word was out. They didn't have Twitter, or email, or Facebook, or Instagram, but they knew about this Jesus. This was the one who raised Lazarus from the dead. We can talk to Him and we know who He is. This is the one who healed a man who was lame from birth, and now he walks. This is the one who healed a blind man who couldn't see it, and now he sees. We've heard about this Jesus. We've heard about this Jesus that took five loaves and two fish and turn them into a meal for 5,000 people. We've heard about Him. And He was in Bethany two miles away. We heard that He's coming to Jerusalem.

So there's an excitement. There's a buzz in the air. People are eager, they're watching for Him, and then they know He's coming.

When they know He's coming, notice what they do in verse 13. *So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him*. Now what they did was they laid down these branches of palm trees and, Matthew tells us, their coats as well to create like a red carpet for Jesus. Because they believed that Jesus would be the King, the Messiah. They knew He was the Messiah or they believed He was the Messiah, but He would be the King who would come in and rescue them. He would save them. What is He going to save them from? Obviously, He's going to save us from the Roman government. He's going to overthrow the Roman government and He's going to relieve us from all the taxation that we have. And wouldn't He make a great king? No more welfare system. He could take care of everybody with food. He could set up stations where people could bring their five loaves and two fish, and it would turn into food for the whole town. He could have healing stations where people would come and get healed of all their disease. Wouldn't this make a great king?

We all get frustrated with the administration and we wish that a new administration would come in. That's what people were thinking. He's going to be the king. He's going to come in. So they're laying this red carpet out before Jesus, so that He can walk on this red carpet. They want to welcome Him in.

They're shouting these words. In fact, it tells us that this is what they're doing – *crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"*

There are three wows in this passage that I think John is referring to in the last verse. That we didn't get this, but now we get it after He was glorified, after He went up to heaven. Now we know more about what this is all about. This is the first wow.

Let me actually show it to you in Psalm 118. This is that great psalm that says – *His love endures forever*. It's a beautiful psalm going through the first verses. But when we get down to verses 25-26, these are the words in the psalm: *Save us* (that's the word *Hosanna*). *Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!*

Now the psalmist we think is probably David. It's not recorded that that's his name here. But we think that this psalmist, as he was writing, we know that he's writing about this magnificence of the Lord and how His love endures forever. He comes to this part and says – *Save us, we pray*. The psalmist does not know that he's writing a Messianic Psalm. That's what we call the psalms that have reference to Jesus Christ as the Messiah. He's writing this psalm and it has a meaning for him. He's writing about how we want Yahweh to save us. That's why the word *LORD* is capitalized. It's Yahweh. We want Yahweh to save us. That's what he's thinking.

But God has a different picture in mind. And now, as John is reading this in Psalm 118, he's going, whoa, that's the exact same words they were saying. As He was coming in to Jerusalem on that donkey, they were saying, "*Hosanna, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*" Wow, this is really amazing. It's amazing because there's this indication, even in the Old Testament, even in the psalms, that the Messiah is going to come, that the people who are saying these words in the New Testament don't realize what they're saying. So as you make this wow statement, you're saying, "Wow, God is big." God is really big.

Amazing. John is recognizing that as he now is, after the fact, recording it for us. So we can be amazed too that God is big. He's tied this statement in the Old Testament to what He's doing in the New Testament in Jesus Christ's coming.

Let's go on to the next verse. That part at the top there says (this is the part from our passage in John 12) – *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!"*

Those words come actually from Zachariah, 9:25-26. So John is thinking there, wow, He came in on a colt. Now normally if a king is going to come into town, he comes in on a stallion or a white horse would be the best. He comes into conquer, or he comes in to take over, or whatever. But Jesus doesn't do that. The reason Jesus doesn't come in on this white horse is because he's coming in with a different kind of kingdom than they imagined. They imagined that this

Messiah, this Jesus would be a great king. He would do all of these things and He's going to overthrow the Roman government. Jesus doesn't have that intention. Jesus has, as Luke tells us, the kingdom is within us. That's what Luke tells us. The kingdom is within us.

See, a kingdom has a ruler, the kingdom has subjects, and the kingdom has a reign. Jesus wants us to know, as He's talking about the kingdom all through the Bible or all through His time in the gospels, He's talking about this kingdom. This kingdom that we can embrace, that we can understand, and it's not a political solution.

Sometimes we look at politics and we say, "Oh, good, I can hardly wait for the next administration." So we put our hope in the administration, or the change in government, or in politics in one way or another. I think it's very important for us to be involved in politics, to look for ways to change the policies of the school board, or look for ways to elect officials that will influence our government with righteousness. I think that's great. But that's not where we put our hope. Because our hope is in this hidden kingdom that Jesus has described. This hidden kingdom that allows us to experience this righteousness in our hearts, this peace that reigns inside of our own lives. That's the kingdom that we're excited about.

So here comes the king riding in and John remembers this is a fulfillment of that prophecy in Zechariah 9:9. Now what's happening is Zechariah is prophesying that there's going to be a Messiah someday who's going to rescue from the Philistines. He's going to rescue from those other oppressor nations around you. He says these words: *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.* Now you're John. You're sitting in church and we're reading the book of Zechariah in our verse-by-verse study here in our church in Jerusalem or whatever town he's in. He comes to this study and he goes, "Wow, that's amazing. Jesus fulfilled that prophecy. Wow." The first wow, God is big. When we look at the psalm now we have, wow, God has a big plan. This is amazing.

It's this wow factor that comes in that that just does something to us. I think when we understand these ideas of the wows that take place here, it does something for our own souls. It does something for our own hearts. Because we all need the recognition that God is big, that God has a plan, especially when we look around and it seems that life is chaotic, or frustrating, or difficult. It's challenging.

We all need this message that John is sharing, but especially those who are exploring Christianity, they're exploring the idea of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Because when you recognize the wows that are included in God's word, you go, "I need this in my life. I need the fact that God is big, that God has a big plan. I need that in my own heart and my own life."

That's why (we will read it again here) John says this in verse 16 – *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.*

Let me share with you one more wow about this story of the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ coming into Jerusalem. It fulfills a prophecy in Daniel 9:34-35. The prophecy, as you know if

you've studied this, is a prophecy about the seventy weeks of Daniel (62 weeks plus 7, 69 weeks). If you take all these 69 weeks (and they represent years) and you multiply, you get up to 483 years. Four hundred eighty-three years from what? Well it says in Daniel 9 for nearly three years from the time that Artaxerxes commanded that the temple will be rebuilt. Now, we just studied that earlier this year. Do you remember Nehemiah went to the king and said, "King, can you send me to Jerusalem?" The king creates a certified document that says, "Yes, you can go and do this. You are my representative to go and rebuild Jerusalem." So that's our starting point. We can figure out that date because we are given the information right in the passage in Nehemiah. We know that that date is March 14, 445 B.C.

So Robert Anderson, who was a police commissioner, also a Christian and a theologian, says, "I wonder what happens if you take those years, 483 years, where would it come to? What would you get?" If you started at the decree to rebuild Jerusalem (because we know what that day is) and you multiply and you get all the days. So if you have 483 years and you multiply that times 360 (because that's the Jewish calendar – 360 days), you're going to get 177,880. So if you're the calculator, you're like the police commissioner who's saying I'm going to calculate 177,880 days from the point of that commission to rebuild Jerusalem with Nehemiah. Where's it going to take me? Now you have to do some calculations and you have to figure out. We've got leap years, we've got months that have 31 days, you've got months that have 28 days. You've got to take all of that into account, and when you do, you come up to a date of April 6, 32 A.D. Now we can go back in the Jewish calendar and find out when Passover was. And you know what? April 6, 32 A.D. is...this Sunday when Jesus is coming in with all His glory. He's coming and riding on this colt, this foal of a donkey into Jerusalem. What an amazing thing.

If God can take care of the details of such a calendar, imagine what He can do in your and my life. It's another wow factor that takes place in the coming of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem.

It even has theological significance. In the Old Testament, if you or I in our families wanted to come to the temple, we would bring a sacrificial lamb. We would take care of that lamb, we would raise that lamb from a little infant. So he's about a year old or less than a year old. We would take that spotless lamb to the priests. We would take that to the priests at the temple and we say, "Would you please inspect the lamb because I want to offer him as the sacrifice." And then the priest would examine the sacrifice and say, "Yes, the sacrifice is acceptable." Then you would put your hands on the sacrifice, and they would kill the lamb, and the blood would be shed. It would be an atonement for your sins. What a beautiful picture.

So on a theological level, what we have here is that Jesus is being presented to the priests. Will they receive Him? No. They won't receive Him. He's coming in on this day. Yet all the people are shouting and they're so excited about what's going to happen. But five days later on Passover, they're going to kill this Lamb, who will be an atonement for our sins. This is such an amazing event, the triumphal entry. An amazing story that we can appreciate and recognize its significance.

Don't you think it's just amazing that Jesus Christ was crucified on Passover? What an amazing thing that He becomes this sacrificial Lamb that would deal with our sins. There's this wow factor that's so big. God is big. God has a big plan. God is concerned about the details.

Which allows me then to say, “God, I need you. I want to trust you. I want you to run my life. I want you to control me. I want you to come into my heart. If you can control the calendar, if you can control the world, you control all these things, then I need you in my life to control the details of my life.” What happens then is that it produces this hope inside of us that we can enjoy and we can appreciate.

Wow, I'm just amazed by the whole story and John's reporting of it. Let's read on.

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.* So they're giving their testimony. Yeah, we saw this guy raised from the dead. *The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.* That's why they're going out to meet Him. And they're shouting, “Hosanna.” It's much easier to shout with the crowd than it is to kneel at the cross. But that's really the message of this story of this week that's taking place that John is going to continue to tell about through the rest of his gospel. That's why they came.

So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”

John is going to include this last section here as an application for us, so that we can appreciate what's actually happening in this story. Verse 20 – *Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks.* These guys had made the pilgrimage from wherever they were over. Now, these are Greeks. These are not Jewish people. They're here celebrating Judaism because they're proselytes. They become Jews. In other words, they've taken on the Jewish faith. They didn't start with the Jewish faith, but they've come to realize that, yes, Judaism is what I want.

I'm always encouraged when I hear and I get to talk to someone who's already started their spiritual pilgrimage. When I hear that someone's a Jehovah's Witness or a Mormon or someone who grew up in a Baptist church or a Methodist church or a Catholic church or something, and they they've been exposed to Christianity but they don't really know what it means on a personal level. I love talking to those people because they've got the first ingredient. They've already started to think about things in spiritual terms. That's got to be the first step for a person to come to the realization that I need the truth. There's something outside of me that I need and I want in my life.

Here the Greeks come. *So these Greeks came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”* I love that statement. “*Sir, we wish to see Jesus.*” I think if we had spiritual glasses, we could look at people in the world and some of them would have on their heart brazened this statement, “I wish I could see Jesus.” Now we don't see that on people's hearts, so we just share the gospel with everybody we come in contact with. And then someone responds and we say, “That one must have had the sign on their chest,” and it says “I wish to see Jesus.” People are waiting to see Jesus. Because Jesus is the answer to the challenges that they face. Jesus brings the solution that they need in their lives. I wish to see Jesus. That ought to go on a plaque somewhere. “*Sir, we wish to see Jesus.*”

Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Watch what Jesus is going to say here. Because what Jesus says becomes the application now of the wow factor. We have all this wow, wow, wow. So what? How does this apply to me? *Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."* He's talking about himself. He's pointing to the fact that you've taken a little seed, just a small seed, and you put it in the ground, you're saying goodbye to that seed. It's gone. But something happens with that seed. Life begins to flow and it turns into this huge stock with lots of seeds on it, which then produce more seeds, and this whole movement takes place. Jesus is saying it starts with me being glorified, which means I need to die. That's what He's saying to these Greeks.

This isn't the kingdom where you're coming in and He's going to overthrow the Roman government. This is a kingdom where He's going to overthrow the power of sin in your life. This is a kingdom where He's going to come in and reign with peace in your heart. That's the kind of kingdom that Jesus is bringing in. He's telling them, "I have to die."

Then He gives the punch line for us. He talks not just about my death, but He talks about our death. He says – *"Whoever loves his life loses it."* Whoever loves his life, loses it. I love life. I have a high view of life. I really enjoy life. *Whoever loves his life loses it.* Hmm. *"And whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."* This word *hate* has to do with value. There's something that we do in our lives where we need to come to a place where we devalue the things around us, the life on a physical plane, and we value life on a spiritual plane in Jesus Christ. That's the life He's talking about.

We all have to come to that place because we get pretty attached to our earthly life. We find ourselves loving things about life that prevent us from experiencing the spiritual benefits of eternal life that God wants to provide for us.

"If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."

I pondered that. What does that mean? What does it mean to love life? I was thinking, if you think of most people, what are the goals they have? What do they really want out of life? I actually got involved in this little study of my own. I'm going to throw up my notes here for you. I created this little chart of five life goals. These are the five top life goals I think people want in their lives. They want happiness, they want security, they want meaningful relationships, they want purpose, and they want hope. That's just my idea of what I think people are looking for in life. This is what they want.

But I think they go toward those things using counterfeits. They're trying to find it in a way that's not the truth. So the next two columns illustrate the counterfeit versus the truth. Notice what it says. The counterfeit: Somebody wants happiness, so they pursue pleasure. I just summarize it with perfection, because if something's going on in my life, then I can't be happy is the idea. So if everything's perfect, then I can be happy. So these people are pursuing this idea I want to fix my life. I want it to be good so I can be happy. But the truth is that if we really want happiness in our lives, it comes through this contentment in knowing Jesus Christ.

People want security today. How do they find it? They accumulate money, or they want to deal with their health, or they are looking for safety. If you invest yourself in those kinds of situations, your security is on edge. We must learn to trust in God. I'm never alone. And that gives me this sense of security that I really need in my life.

We all want meaningful relationships. So people will give or take sex in order to try to find this. Or find their Facebook friends. Or they have unrealistic expectations about marriage or about friendships. So there's a disappointment that people often experience when it comes to meaningful relationships. But the greatest meaningful relationships come by following the example of Jesus Christ, who had this love that was unselfish, that was a sacrificial love. When we have that kind of love with other people, it increases the meaning in those relationships. But it starts in understanding what Christ's love is all about.

People want purpose today. How are they going to find that purpose? My purpose isn't in happiness or in wealth. It's what I'm going to invest in this power of influence I want to make my stamp in the world. Young people in particular often want this. They want to have some way to have a life that's meaningful, that makes a difference. They want to make a difference in other people's lives or in our world in general. I think that's good. But our purpose really must be in being useful by serving God. Because then we're joining this purpose that God has designed for our world and we get to be a part of something that is making a difference. This is big.

Of course we all want hope. But some people put their hope in politics, they put their hope in world peace, or whatever else they might want to put their hope in. We must have a confidence in God that's amazing. I think that's what Jesus is talking about. When Jesus gives the answer and He says people who love their life will lose it, but people who hate their life, in perspective, will gain life. John wants us to know that that's the purpose of John's gospel. It's about Jesus.

Of course, you might say, "Well, he's preaching to those people that are out there who really need Jesus. That's why he's talking about these things." But don't you find yourself looking at some of the counterfeits sometimes? I think I do. I need this. I need to keep going back to the truth. I need to love life as God has designed it. I need to love Jesus Christ as the most important thing in my life.

Wow. It's the wow factor. Wow, that God is big. Wow, that God has a big plan. Wow, that God is concerned about the details. If those things are true, He's concerned about my life. He offers me this life, abundant life, as John described in the previous chapter. Amazing.

Would you stand with me? Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Lord, we are amazed. As we think about you, we're certainly surprised by these prophecies. So many of them in the Old Testament that predict the coming of the Messiah and then Jesus fulfilling all of those prophecies. That's just really interesting. It creates this confidence in us that you are the answer, that you have a plan. We need that confidence every day in our own lives, in our own hearts, to deal with our own challenges that we face in our lives.

Lord, I ask that you would grant us the grace to ponder the life that you want us to have, the life that comes in Jesus Christ. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.