Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Necessary Death of the King
Scripture: John 12:12-33
Code: 1277

This morning in our study of the Word of God I want us to walk where Jesus walked through a narrative passage that records for us that Palm Sunday many years ago when He entered Jerusalem. John's Gospel, Chapter 12. For this Sunday and next and on Friday as well, we want to examine the events of this week when our Lord entered the city, died on the cross, and rose again from the grave.

John, Chapter 12 is one of the several Gospel accounts of the day known as Palm Sunday, that Sunday when Christ entered the city of Jerusalem to the Hosanna's of the multitude. Traditionally Palm Sunday is a time of celebration. Palm Sunday is a day for Hallelujahs, a day for Hosannas. As King Jesus enters Jerusalem to the praise of His people, the waving of palm branches, the casting of their garments at His feet. This is the day when the people of Jerusalem and of all Israel gathered to the Passover. People who were even gentile proselytesto Judaism, were all in a massive mob hailing Him as Son of David, King of Israel. A day in which the anticipation of the long awaited Messiah seemed to have met its fruition, its fulfillment. Finally He had come. Finally the one they had prayed for and longed for had arrived. Tragically, by Friday He was dead; really, at the hands of the very people who had hailed Him on Sunday. And so we look at John 12 to see the King who came to die.

Let me give you just a little bit of an insight into the preliminary events. You can never treat the story of Christ during the holy week unless you include the resurrection of Lazarus. And yet it amazes me how time after time, when chroniclers wish to tell us what happened to Christ the week He died, they give little or not reference to the resurrection of Lazarus which is the heart of the whole issue. For it was the raising of Lazarus from the dead that set off the tremendous events of Palm Sunday which led to his death. And unless you understand how the resurrection of Lazarus fits you will not understand why things happened the way they happened to Christ.

Most all films and television programs that depict the life of Christ leave much to be desired. I don't think I've ever seen one that really properly dealt with the significance of the resurrection of Lazarus.

Lazarus was well known. He and his sisters, Mary and Martha, lived in a suburb of Jerusalem known as Bethany. They were deeply religious people. They lived a maximum of two miles from the temple itself. And their matter of life was to be involved in the very concourse of Jerusalem, in its religion and in its economics, and in its social life. They were apparently hospitable people as we find them opening their home to the Lord and His disciples on many occasions. When Lazarus died it was apparent that there was a mass of humanity there to mourn his death, just as there was to celebrate

his resurrection. They were well known people.

And when Lazarus died it was a fact that he was dead. He was buried and in the grave for four days. And the Jews even believe that on the fourth day, whatever spirit of the man lingered around the body left because the decay was so vile. And since they didn't embalm at all, the decomposition would be so severe that the spirit would then depart on the fourth day. That was their tradition. And so he was dead. And he was good and dead by their own standard. And they knew it. And they knew the location of his burial. There was no question that he was dead.

And then all of a sudden Jesus came, and he was alive. And he walked out of that grave. And he was loosed from his grave clothes. And he was involved again in his community. And the word of the resurrection of Lazarus went like wildfire through the congregation massing itself in Jerusalem for the great events of the Passover. Here was one who raised the dead.

There was a lot of word around about Jesus. He had made some shocking and startling claims. He had healed people. And some of them were around. And he had fed people without food. He had to create it Himself. And some of them may have been around, or at least familiar with those in Galilee who were. There was plenty of information about Jesus. And now this cataclysmic event of raising Lazarus from the dead brought the city to a fever pitch about the potentiality of this man being the long awaited Messiah.

And so Jesus captures the moment for Himself because His hour has come. On previous occasions, Jesus avoided the confrontation that He seeks at this hour because it is absolutely necessary that He move immediately now to the cross. He has from the foundation of the world been designed to die as the Passover Lamb. And it is Passover season.

It is the right year, and the right week, and the right day, and the right hour. The prophets have laid it out clearly and explicitly. For example, in Daniel Chapter 9, the prophet Daniel says that there will be 69 weeks of years, or 69 times seven from the decree to rebuild the city to the day that the Messiah the Prince enters it. There will be 69 weeks of years. That means 483 years from the decree to rebuild to the city to the time the Messiah enters the city as its Prince. That's what Daniel said. The decree to the entrance, 483 years. Now they counted their years as 360 day years.

There was a very gifted and intelligent man with Scotland Yard in the last generation, by the name of Sir Robert Anderson. He decided to make a study of this and whether the prophecy was actually accurate. And so, using all of the historical information he could, he determined that the decree of Artaxerxes to rebuild the city came on the 14thof March in 445 B.C. And Jesus entered Jerusalem on the 6thof April 32 A.D. And Sir Robert Anderson said from 14thof March 445 B.C. by Jewish counting to 6thof April 32 A.D. is exactly 173,180 days or to the day 483 years.

Jesus entered the city at the exact day, the exact moment. And whereas in prior times he had avoided the conflicts and the confrontations saying frequently, "Mine hour is not yet come." This time His hour was come. And it didn't matter what was going on with Pharisees and Romans, He would force the issue to be at that cross at the prescribed moment. To set the stage He raised Lazarus from the dead. He didn't want to heal Lazarus when he was sick. He heard that Lazarus was sick and he stayed up where he was, up by the Jordan, and he stayed there for four days to make Lazarus good and dead, and so everybody would know it, and to fulfill that Jewish tradition after the fourth day the spirit departs to let them know that he was dead. And at that moment He entered the scene and raised him from the dead because He wanted to set the stage to force His own death. Earlier in the Gospel of John He had said, "No man takes my life from me. I lay it down of myself."

He was the architect of every move. And so as we approach Palm Sunday, there's a certain sense in which we cannot believe the Hosannas. We cannot accept the Hallelujahs. Somewhere behind the praise, there lingers an echo of "crucify Him, crucify Him, crucify Him." There is a dichotomy. There is a paradox. There is a mingling of two attitudes. And Jesus is very much aware of them both. He accepts the Hosannas for what they are, expressions of the fickle, politically oriented, self-centered group of people who would like to have Rome off their necks a little more.

Let me give you an insight into the day before Palm Sunday. Chapter 12:1 "The Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany where Lazarus was who had been dead whom He raised from the dead." And of course the Scripture points that out because that's the key to the whole thing. There they made Him a supper. "And Martha served, and Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him." You see how it continues to point to the fact that Lazarus was dead, was raised, and is now eating.

But look what happens. "Then took Mary a pound," by the way a pound is 12 ounces. It's a Jewish pound, not an American pound. It would be 12 ounces. "Of ointment," and the word ointment is perfume, literally 12 ounces of perfume. Now that's a lot of perfume. That would last a long time. I don't know if you've bought any perfume lately. But you get a little tiny thing of perfume for ____, and you pay a lot of money for it if it's real perfume. Well this was 12 ounces of perfume made out of spike nard. Now that doesn't mean anything to us. But to them it did. Nard was a very rare herb that came only from get this, the HimalayaMountains on the west of China. And to get that they had to go way into the mountains to collect the herb. And it had to be transported on camel back all the way across Asia to find its way into Jerusalem. It was worth a fortune. And it says so. It says it was very costly. It was extravagant. And another Gospel tells us, I think it's Matthew, that records that she kept it in an alabaster box. This was a priceless commodity. Twelve ounces of perfume imported from the Himalaya Mountains.

What did she do with it? She anointed the feet of Jesus. Now wait a minute. You don't use that kind of stuff to wash somebody's feet. The roads were dusty and dirty, and feet got dirty. But you do not wash people's feet in priceless perfume imported from the Himalaya Mountains.

Well I tell you another thing you don't do either. It says, "And she wiped His feet with her hair." Now let me tell you something about Jewish tradition. There was a rule in Jewish tradition and it was simply this: a woman never unbinds her hair in the presence of a man who's not her husband. ___ ____ propriety. Only a woman of the world or the street would do that. She flew in the face, defying all of tradition by even unbinding her hair, and then to take her hair and use her hair to wash the feet. By the way, it does tell us a little bit about how long hair must have been in those days. She washed His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Well there would be no doubt about that. Twelve ounces of that stuff would do it. I imagine the neighborhood got the wind.

You know what I believe? I believe the Holy Spirit records that because to me that's the apex of love. When love has reached its limits, love gives. And when love reaches the limits of its giving, it gives the greatest thing it has, a thing of most value. And I am confident without doubt that the most priceless commodity that Mary possessed was an alabaster box filled with this stuff. And that the greatest expression of her love was to pour every bit of it on the feet of Jesus, extravagant humility and worship. And I think she perceived that He was going to the cross. And in this outburst of love, she just literally pours her fortune all over His feet. Extravagant love!

What did I tell you last week? Nothing wrong with having a treasure. It's what you use it for isn't it. She poured her treasure at His feet, hardly was such to be used for that. But to me it shows the pinnacle of love. Those who chose Christ loved Him with a love that was so magnanimous they couldn't restrain themselves from pouring out their treasure, from breaking with propriety and tradition, from doing what just wasn't done because the love was so totally consuming.

As marvelous as that is, so much the opposite is the next verse, stark in its contrast. "Then, 'saith one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son who should betray Him,' Why was not this perfume sold for 300 dinerii and given to the poor?" Now you say ah, he's a real philanthropist, got a heart for the poor. And that's the way they depict him a lot in the movies. That isn't what the Bible says. This he said, "not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and he had the bag, and he bore what was in it." He was stealing from the till. He was a thief. Don't you ever think for a minute that Judas was some kind of a misguided patriot. He was an avaricious, greedy, devil-filled thief, that's all. What a contrast! Here in a little home in Bethany, love reaches its climax and so does hate.

That very night Judas stole away and sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Mary gave all she had, and Judas got all he could. You see, love and hate reach its pinnacle in Jesus Christ. He is the dividing line in human destiny. He is the dividing line in human attitudes. And we all line up with Mary or Judas.

Now what happened the next day after these climactic events? On the very next day, He entered into the city. It says in verse 12, "On the next day, many people that were come to the feast when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet Him." Stop right there. Immediately after the events of Bethany, this love hate thing that you see in a small way in the house at Bethany, you will see in a massive way in the mob scene that occurs in Jerusalem. Everything is peaking out right here. Love has reached its climax. Hatred has reached its climax. And it all comes into full mentation on this day and surges toward His execution on Friday.

Let's look at the scene. Let me reconstruct the day for you if I can. It's morning in Bethany. Jesus has spent the night with Mary, Martha, Lazarus. They have been his hosts. And in the morning, he rises up with His disciples who are there with Him. And he leaves early. And as they walk, Jerusalem is here. Bethany is here two miles away. And in between is a mountain, just a hill really. It's called the Mount of Olives. No doubt as Jesus approached that eastern slope of that little hill he stopped.

And as we put the gospel record together, we see that He said to two of His disciples, "Would you go into a certain village . . ." And we don't know what village it was, but one of the suburbs of Jerusalem that hung around the main city. And He said, would you go to that suburb and you will find tied to a post two animals, a donkey and a donkey's colt. And would you bring them to me. His disciples went to the village which he named. And just as He had said, they found those two animals. And they untied those animals to take them. And the owners of the animals said to them, "why are you taking our animals?" to which they simply replied, "The Lord needs them." That's all they said. And the owners complied which indicates to me that the owners were already disciples of Jesus. And so oft they went with the animals.

And as they arrived at the point where Christ had waited for them, they took their own garments, the disciples did, and threw them over the backs of the animals in order that there might be a place for the Master to sit. And you remember that the Master chose not the mother, but the colt to ride. I suppose it is fitting that the pure unspotted Messiah would choose a virgin animal as His beast of burden. And off He went toward the city. Now by this time, He has a group around Him. His disciples are there, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, all the little village of Bethany. I'm sure the people who owned the animals were there and all of their friends. And there's a little crowd beginning to grow around Jesus as He moves toward the eastern gate of the city which faces directly at the Mount of Olives and right over to Bethany.

And so here comes this little group. Well they know that Lazarus is alive from the dead because they're his friends. So there's a tremendous excitement about what is gonna happen. What is going on here? They are aware of Zechariah 9:9 that the King is going to enter the city riding on the colt, the fowl of an ass. And the anticipation of their hearts must be beginning to build and to surge.

Maybe this is the hour. Even later than this, the disciples asked, is this the time when you're gonna restore the Kingdom to us? And so the fever of the Kingdom, and the overthrow of Rome, and that the Messiah had arrived; was this his moment? Was Zechariah 9:9 coming to pass?

And so the little group that started out at Bethany began to grow as they moved along the path, and get larger and larger. And then as they came to the city, the Gospel record tells us that masses of the pilgrims inside the city heard that Jesus was coming. They knew about Jesus. But mostly they knew He had raised Lazarus from the dead. And there was already a fever pitch in the religious excitement of the moment in the Passover time. And so with that, and on top of that, the word was spreading like wildfire about the power of Jesus. And some were saying He was the deliverer. He is the Messiah. He is the King. And others were saying, you know He is in the line of David as well. And so the thing began to mound and to build, until the enthusiasm caused the crowd inside the city to plunge outside that eastern gate and meet the little group coming from Bethany.

And so came together these two seas of humanity like two great crashing waves. And in the midst of that rang out the Hosannas. We see first then the faithful presentation in verses 12 and 13. "On the next day many people were come to the feast, and when they heard that Jesus was coming they took branches of palm trees and they went forth to meet Him." They didn't even wait till he got there. I believe that the pathway from the Mount of Olives to the eastern gate through the little valley of Kiedronwas strewn with people. The Bible tells us they threw their clothes in front of the donkey's tracks. They threw palm branches down. And they hailed Him.

And notice what they said in 13, "Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." And the other gospels said they called Him "Son of David, Son of David!" They knew He was in the royal line. With all their hearts, they hoped He was the King.

I can't tell you how great the crowd was, but I can give you a hint. A census done around this time that's been left for us through archeological studies indicates that at one Passover for example, they killed 256,500 lambs, a quarter of a million lambs at one Passover. Take a minimum of 10 people for a lamb, and that's 2.5 or 6 million people. We don't know how many people were in Jerusalem. But it was a massive demonstration. And here they were screaming for Christ to be crowned as King.

Notice that they were waving palm branches. If you studied the Old Testament carefully, we don't have time to get into it, you will find that those kinds of branches and that kind of celebration using branches, is indicative of salvation. It symbolizes salvation. It also symbolizes strength, and beauty, and joy that flows from salvation. You see it in Revelations 7:9, also in the second coming. But it is the sign of salvation, the palm branches, indicating deliverance and salvation. And so they are crying the He be their savior.

You notice the word, Hosanna. Literally, in the Hebrew, the word means save now. That's what it means. They are crying for a redeemer, and a deliverer, and a savior. And they say, "Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." And that is a line right out of the Halel, the last psalm of the Halel, the singing Psalm, Psalm 118. That's verse 26. And Halel number 118 is called the Conquerors Psalm. You are the Conqueror! You are the Savior! You are the deliverer! Boy, those are the right words aren't they. Man does this look god! I mean the whole crowd has gone after Him.

These are the fulfilled prophecies. So He presents Himself to them and prophecies are fulfilled as He moved among them. You say, was He thrilled? No. There's a little bi-play that you have to see in Luke 19. He wasn't thrilled. Why? Because He knew what was in their hearts. Look at Luke 19:39. Verse 38 begins by saying, "The people were all saying, 'Blessed be the King who cometh in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven. Glory in the highest!'" Boy, they were having a great time! Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord.

But look at verse 39, "And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto Him, 'Master, rebuke thy disciples.'" Master isn't an indication of deity. That's just rabbi, teacher. Don't let them get away with this blasphemy calling you by this. Don't let them call you the King who comes in the name of the Lord. Glory in the highest. Master, rebuke these people. You see, they're saying in effect, you're a man and you know it. You're too good of a teacher. You're too knowledgeable in the Old Testament to stand there and take this homage. Rebuke them! And so he sees behind the Hosannas, the hatred. And there you see that dichotomy again of love and hate. And he answered and said unto them, "I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out!" This is the day I'm to be hailed as King. If they don't do it the rocks are gonna do it.

Now watch. And when he was come near - He hasn't even gotten to the gate yet. He's just near it. He beheld the city, and He did what? He wept. Why did He weep? Because he knew the fickleness of their attitude. He knew this was not gonna last at all. He knew this was a homage that was short live. And when He didn't turn out to be the political deliverer, the military Messiah they wanted, they would turn their backs on Him. You see the people had no spiritual perception. They wanted somebody to knock off Rome, to get Rome off their back, to break the Roman yolk, to set them free.

Why in a conversation in the 8th Chapter of John when Jesus talks to them about freedom, the Jews had the gall to say to him, "We have never been a slave to any man." That was ridiculous. They were under Roman slavery right then. But they would never even admit it. That's how bad they hated their slavery. And they were looking for a political Messiah. And they thought, boy anybody that can raise the dead can sure handle the Romans. Boy, we'll have an insurrection like none ever.

They were thinking back to the Macabeeanrevolution their fathers had told them about when Judas Macabeeascame out of the hills with his sons, and when Judas Macabeeas led a revolution, and

knocked off the Greeks and set them into a temporary time of freedom. And by the way, when Judas Macabeeas did that, and arrived at Jerusalem, they cried out to Him the same things they were saying to Jesus here.

But Jesus knew better. And so when he came near, he beheld the city and wept saying this - Here is His heart. You want to know what He was thinking? Here it is, "If thou hadst known, even though, at least in this thy day . . ." If you just knew now when I'm here, when it's your day, and it's your time. If you'd just have known the things which belong to your peace, but now they're hidden from your eyes. And that's judicial. "For the day shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee around, and keep thee on every side. And so lay thee even with the ground. And thy children within thee. And they shall not leaven thee one stone upon another because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." He says, when I came, you didn't accept me. You didn't know God was in your midst. And because of that, you are blind, and you will be destroyed. And less than 40 years later, Titus in his passion came, built a trench around the city, surrounded the city, sieged the city, and slaughtered 1,100,000 Jews and leveled Jerusalem. Jesus knew the fickleness of their hearts. He was under no illusions at all. While they were shouting Hosanna, he was weeping.

I think Jesus, even realizing He couldn't speak to the multitude because there was no way, rode the donkey as a demonstration of the fact that He wasn't the kind of Messiah they thought He was. You see, they knew well that when a king rode a white horse it meant a war, and when a King rode a donkey, it meant peace. And He rode a donkey. He came to make peace, not war. Peace between men and God. He was interested in the inner man, not the outer man. He wasn't trying to change the politics, He was trying to change men's hearts.

Well, we see the faithful perplexity in verse 16. Jesus found the young ass, sat on it. For it is written, "Fear not daughter of Zion, behold thy King cometh sitting on an ass's colt," fulfilling Zechariah 9:9. And this was exciting to everybody. But immediately in verse 16, these things understood not His disciples at the first. Well I can understand that. They didn't understand it. They're saying, now wait a minute, wait a minute. When we were up there by the Jordan, Jesus said I'm to go to Jerusalem and die. Now He comes to die. And now all of a sudden He gets on a donkey. And He rides into the city. And Zechariah's prophecy is fulfilled that the King comes ___ ___. They didn't understand it.

The reasons they didn't understand it, you see, is because they could never understand the interval between the first and the second coming because it was a mystery. No Old Testament saint understood it. The disciples were in a basically, perpetual state of confusion. For example, Jesus wanted to wash their feet, and Peter says, "No, no, no, do not wash my feet. You're the king. You've come to reign, set up your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Peter, you don't understand what I'm doing now, but you will understand it." In other words, they didn't perceive the need for humiliation. They saw the Messiah coming and reigning. They didn't make the distinction between a first and a second coming. It was hidden from them. They were confused.

Jesus said in Chapter 14, "I'm going to go away." And they said, "well, Phillip says, 'Lord, where are you going to go? We don't know where you're going to go? And how will we ever get there?'" They didn't understand it. They were heart sick. Their hearts were troubled. He was gonna leave them. He says, "You know the way, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.'" I'm sure Phillip still scratched his head. He said to him, "Well show us the father." He says, "Have I been so long with you and you don't know. If you've seen me, you've seen the Father." You see, they didn't really understand. They knew Christ, and they loved Him, and they worshipped Him, and they believed that He was the Son of the living God, God in human flesh. But all the parts of the puzzle never quite came together.

Watch verse 16, "These things understood not His disciples at the first, but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written about Him, and that they had done these things unto Him." Listen, they didn't understand until Christ was glorified. Why? Because when Christ was glorified and took His place at the right hand of the Father, whom did He send? He sent the Holy Spirit. That's exactly what John 14:26 is saying. It says this, "Jesus says to His disciples, 'But the comforter who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name . . .'" now listen, "He will teach you all things and bring all things to your light."

Remembrance! You can't remember. You don't understand. I'm going to send the Spirit and the light will go on. And when the Spirit came, then the Old Testament had meaning. And the things Jesus said had meaning, and it all came together. Beloved, do you know what this says about the Holy Spirit? He is the resident truth teacher, isn't He? There's the best illustration I know of in the Scripture of the difference between living with and without the indwelling of the Spirit. Those who lived prior to the coming of the Spirit of God to indwell the church had a certain mystery all the time about how all these parts of the puzzle came together. When the Spirit comes, He becomes our teacher. And so does John tell us in 1 John 2, that we do not need to be taught by men for we have an anointing from God who teaches us all things, the Spirit of God.

And so at this point they were confused. How can He be gonna die! And he said that already, but now that all of this hoopla, what's going on? And so the faithful were perplexed. Look at the fickle people in verse 17, "The people therefore that were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his grave and raised him from the dead, bore witness." I mean everybody saw the resurrection. You couldn't deny it. They knew Lazarus had come from the grave. And for this cause, the people met him. This was what drew the crowd, you see. This is the whole scene set up. For they heard that He had done this miracle.

Listen, you can always get a crowd if you do miracles. Thrill seekers are always gonna be in line. They were all there. I mean they were the same kind of people that were in Galilee when He fed them. They all showed up in the morning for a free breakfast. Thrill seekers, there's always a lot of them. All you have to do, and I'll tell you that in the ministry, you watch the charlatans and the

phonies that try to represent Christ and they'll inevitably talk about miracles because that's how you get the thrill seekers. That's how you pile up the people looking for the next supernatural trick, the next sensation.

There they were. They wanted another miracle, and the miracle they wanted was to get Rome off their back. But they weren't legitimate. They were the fickle people, fickle. Later that week, they screamed for Barabbas to be released and the sinless Jesus to be crucified. Jesus had a lot of followers like this. In John Chapter 2 it said He didn't commit Himself to a certain group because He knew what was in their heart, and it wasn't real. In John Chapter 6 it says many of His disciples walked no more with Him. In John Chapter 8 it says many believed on His name but He never committed Himself to them, but rather said to them, "If you continue in my word then you're my real disciple and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." In John Chapter 12, verse 42 it says, "Many of the rulers believed on Him, but because of the Pharisees they didn't confess Him lest they should be put out of the synagogue for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

He always had fickle, phony short lived followers. And here was a whole crowd of them. And the truth of the matter was expressed in Luke. "They didn't believe and that's why He cried." Because instead of really knowing Him as King, they would be destroyed in a devastation of judgment. You see the frustrated Pharisees in verse 19. They're really panicky. They want Jesus dead. Back in verse 57 of Chapter 11 they made that clear. They gave a commandment to everybody that if anybody knew where He was they should show them so they could take Him and kill Him. They wanted Him dead. He really was a problem to them. He contradicted their system. He was a rebuke to everything in their lives and their theology. They wanted Him dead. And they were the pawns of Satan.

And so when the crowd started moving after Him, they panicked in verse 19, "And the Pharisees therefore said among themselves. . .," they started talking to each other, "Perceive ye how you prevail." Nothing. Hey nobody's doing any good here. Our ____ falling apart. We're not having our way with the people. The world has gone after Him. The world has gone after Him. Jesus knew that wasn't true. But they didn't have any spiritual perception. So they thought that this was it. They'd lost. The whole world was gonna follow Jesus. And they were panicky. They wanted Him dead.

We meet another group. We meet the Pagans the following Pagans we call them. In verse 20, look at this. I think it's a beautiful little vignette that's said in here. "And there were certain Pagans," the word heathen, Pagan, Greek, Gentile, all the same word. "There were certain Pagans among them that came up to worship at the feast." What were these? These were Gentile proselytes to Judaism like Cornelius. They had believed in the God of Israel. They had identified Him. They were there for the feasts. So they came.

And they came to Phillip in verse 21 of Bethsaida of Galilee and they desired him saying, "Sir we would see Jesus." We'd like to see Jesus. They kind of felt second class in a way. Here they were in the midst of Jerusalem. And they were in the midst of the swirl of Jewish life. And they identified with Judaism. But I guess they felt a little bit outside. And they kind of came to Phillip and said, "Phillip, we'd sure like to see Jesus. We've heard so much about Him. We'd like to see Him." Well, Phillip cometh and telleth Andrew. And Andrew and Phillip tell Jesus.

Now you think well oh Phillip would say, "Oh come on, anybody seeking Jesus, come on! Let's go see Jesus. He'd love to see you! He doesn't mind that your Pagans." Why, after all Haggai 2:7 says, "That he is the desire of all nations," not just Israel. "Come on!" But he didn't. Why? Well number one, maybe Jesus was busy. I mean He had a pretty big crowd around Him. Maybe He thought that He and Andrew could handle the problem. But I think beyond that, he probably remembered some statements Jesus made. One is in Matthew 10:5, and the other is in Matthew 15:24. And in both those statements Jesus said in effect, "I am not come but for the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And they remembered that the Lord said He had come to Israel. And here were some Pagans. And they were perhaps a little bit fearful about that because they were thinking, "Well, the Lord is coming to Israel." And that was true.

Even Paul said, "The gospel was preached to the Jew," what? "First." Why? Well it isn't because they're better. It's because the Lord wanted a nation to be a witness nation. When Paul went into a city, he wanted to reach the Gentiles in that city. He was an apostle to the Gentiles, right? But where's the first place he went? The Jewish synagogue. Why? So that he could win some Jews who were already open to him as a Jew so that he'd have somebody to help him with the Gentiles. Well in the same way Christ came to Israel, not to isolate Israel, but to transform Israel into a witnessing nation to reach the world. Now when Israel refused in their day of visitation, there was a wide open door to the gentiles. And that's why the church is the church made up of all who believe. And I believe this beautiful vignette is set in here just to let us know that Christ, even at this moment, when He was presented as the King of Israel to the people of Israel, knew full well that it wouldn't be Israel that would want to see Him. It would be Gentiles. Just as the first announcement of His Messiahship came to a half breed Samaritan woman in John 4, so the last great announcement comes here to these Gentiles. He is truly the Savior of the whole world.

And so in somewhat quizzical reluctance, Phillip, remembering that Jesus had said he'd come to the lost sheep of the house of Israel goes to Andrew, and Andrew and Phillip went to Jesus. "Lord," they probably said, "we're trying to just figure out. Do you want to talk to these folks?" You know something? It never tells us whether they came. But you know what I believe. I believe they did come. And I believe that because I do not know Christ to ever turn down a seeking heart, never. "Him that cometh unto me," he said in Chapter 6, "I will in no ____," what? Cast out. And I believe in 23, "And Jesus answered them." I think probably the "them" would have included those Pagans, a

group of disciples and the seeking Pagans. I believe we're brought to the presence of Christ.

Now we come to the climax. And I want you to watch this. Just imagine the fire of enthusiasm going on. I mean these people are at a fever pitch, yelling and hollering, thrilled about a miraculous redeemer, deliverer, Savior, Son of David, King of Israel who's riding into the city fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy. He has tremendous power. He is gonna be the conqueror. He is going to do what they want done. He is going to fill all of the anticipation and all of the hope of Jewish hearts for centuries. And even the Pharisees are in utter chaos. And the crowd is thrilled. And even the Gentiles have gathered around Him. And it's a glorious moment. And they expect that any moment the actual fall, and He will reign.

And then He speaks the fatal prediction. "And Jesus answered them saying, 'The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.'" Stop right there. Oh, that sounds good! That's what we wanna here. This is the moment! History has reached its climax! You're gonna be glorified! You're gonna be exalted! And by the way, He calls Himself Son of Man. Where did He get that? Do you remember? Daniel 7:13 and 14, that is a Messianic title attached to Christ by Daniel in reference to His coming to reign as King of kings at the end of the times of the Gentiles. So it was an eschatological term, Son of Man. The term indicated that He was the One that Daniel said would come and destroy the governments of the nations, and set up His own eternal Kingdom. And so He calls Himself by that term. And he says His hour has come, and His glory is imminent. Man, you can imagine their hearts begin to pound so much their little tunics were going back and forth.

In the midst of all of that, He says an utterly devastating, shocking thing, verse 24, "Verily, verily I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Now listen, what is that saying? What is He saying? Simply this, salvation can't come to a Jew. Deliverance can't come to this nation. Redemption can't come to these Pagans, these Gentiles unless I - what? Die. That's what he's saying. That's the end of all their dreams. This is where the crowd peeled back.

What kind of an illustration is this? Well, take a kernel of wheat, a grain. That grain has in it, life principal, reproductive capability. But it is encased in a shell. As long as that shell holds that life principal inside, nothing happens. You can store that grain, stack it, set it on a table, whatever. I've even seen little boxes. And you ever seen little ____ things with pieces of grain. Nothing happens. What happens when you put that seed into the ground? The chemical in the soil acts on that outer shell, and it rots and decomposes. And when the outer shell is decomposed and rotted, it breaks away. And the life principal inside is free to reproduce. But the seed has to die, doesn't it? That's what Jesus is saying. They were agrarian in their society. They knew that. He had to be buried in a sense, a shell of life, rotted and decomposed so that out of it could spring life.

He says, "Look, except this fall into the ground and die, it abides alone." If Jesus came into the world and was nothing but a good teacher, if Jesus came into the world and was nothing more than a moral example, if He did nothing but just talk to us about God and tell us how to live, and show us the best that a man could be, and went right back to heaven, He'd stay there forever alone because none of us could get there. And when these people come along and say, "Well He was a wonderful teacher, and He was a good man. He was a moral giant." If that's all He was then He'll spend forever in heaven alone. It abides alone.

I heard an interview between a man who says He's an evangelical leading. He's well known. He was talking to a Muslim. They were interacting about who they believed in. And he said, "Well," this man who claims to be a Christian said, "Do we believe in the same God?" And he said, "Well our God is Allah, and your God is God." But He said, "Allah is simply the Arabic word for God. So if you were in my country and you wanted to talk about your God, you'd call Him Allah." The man said, "Oh, then we actually worship the same God." Well I got a little nervous about that point. Then he said, "Well what do you believe about Christ?" "Well we believe that Christ was a God. And we believe this and this and it was wonderful. And we believe in Him, and we believed He was a Savior. And we believe He was a deliverer. And we believe . . ." He said, "Do you believe that Christ died for our sins and rose again?" He said, "No, we don't believe that. We believe that Christ avoided the cross and we believe that a substitute died there that wasn't really Christ. But Christ avoided all that." "Oh!" he said, "In other words, we believe the same thing about Christ. You just don't believe that He died and rose again."

Well, if you don't believe that, then you don't believe anything about Christ because that's the epitome of everything. If He doesn't go into the ground and die, then He abides alone. Then there can be a heaven as big as all infinity but nobody will be in it but God and His angels. That's it. He has to die or He lives alone. But if He dies, it says in verse 24, "He brings forth much fruit." You know something beloved, He did die didn't He? And because He died He produced a spiritual harvest. What about that much fruit? Go down to verse 32. "And I," He says, "If I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me." And the all there doesn't mean everybody who ever lived. What it means is all Jews, Gentiles, rich, poor, old, young, all the strata, all the extents of man to man if I be lifted up. "This," He said, verse 33, "signifying what death He should die," what death He should die. You see, He had to die. And the people said in verse 34, "What kind of a Son of Man is this? Who is this? What do we got here?" That was the beginning of the end for them.

If you don't understand that He had to die for your sin then you don't understand anything about Christ. He had to die. The wages of sin is what? Death. And He bore your death to pay the price for your sin. Oh what a great thing. Listen, don't get carried away with the Hosannas and the Hallelujahs. Extremely fickle, very passing, Jesus didn't even believe them. Don't you. When the world starts trying to throw its tokens at Jesus in this week, don't take it for any more than it is, superficial, unless they want to talk about His death for sin. I don't know who you all are this morning,

or where you are in your life. But I'll tell you this, if you believe everything there is to believe about Christ but don't believe He died for your sin and receive that gift of salvation, all the rest is meaningless, meaningless. He had to die. That's the meaning that He gave to Palm Sunday.

And he takes us immediately from this day to the day of his death. One writer summed it up this way, "They pluck their palm branches and hail Him as King early on Sunday. They spread out their garments. Hosannas they sing early on Sunday. But where is the noise of their hurrying feet, the crown they offer, the scepter, the seat? The King wonders hungry forgot in the street early on Monday."

Let's pray. We thank you Father for the hearts of those who are here who worship you on Monday, Tuesday, every other day as they do on Sunday. We resist the tokenism of the world, its fickle homage. And we praise you for that which is real and genuine. Lord I pray right now for those who may be in our midst who've never opened their hearts to Christ, who perceive Jesus to be something less than the crucified Savior. May this be the day when they see that He had to die or He would have been alone. He had to pay the price for sin or we could never enter your presence. May we see that He was the King who came to die. And may we love Him on Monday, and Tuesday, and Wednesday, and Thursday, and Friday, and Saturday. May we be like Mary who poured out all the treasure she had, not like Judas who tried to get all He could. May our hearts be filled with love for this One who came, who touched the earth, an incarnation to die for us. And for those who are here Lord who have never come to know Jesus Christ, we pray that this might be that great day, that glorious day when their hard hearts melt at the breath of the Spirit, and they open themselves to Christ. And for those of us who are already Christians Lord, may this be a day when we reconfirm our dedication to the One who bore our sins in His own body, when we relight the fire of our own Hosannas to give true, and honorable, and righteous praise to the one who is so deserving. Now may the grace of God and the love of Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now, until we meet again, Amen.

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