

**To Exalt Christ;
To Equip, Encourage, Exhort, Edify God's Elect**

**Preparing For Departure: Called to Praise
John 12:12-26**

This morning, having completed our sermon series regarding the Upper Room Discourse, and this being Palm Sunday, the official start of holy week, we have to back up, as it were, in the gospel of John to John 12. It tells of Jesus being in Bethany, on his way to Jerusalem for what will include the Upper Room Discourse, leading to Good Friday and Easter Sunday. But in Bethany something important happens first.

Perfume – John 12:1-11

In verses 1-11, which we did not read, John tells us that Jesus arrived in Bethany six days before the Passover. He went to the house of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. While having dinner, Mary, Lazarus' sister, took perfume and poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. Judas, who would betray him, complained about the waste of the perfume. But Jesus said, *"Let her alone. It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial."* It was important because Jesus used it to predict his death and burial.

In 2 Corinthians 2:15 Paul wrote – *"For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death, to the other the fragrance of life."* This is the diffusing nature and power of the gospel. The perfume filled the house that day, just as the aroma of Christ in the gospel, fills the entire earth. To those perishing it is death, to those saved the gospel is life.

In 1 Corinthians 1:18 Paul wrote, *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."* In verses 10, 11, is the foolishness of the chief priests who wanted

to kill Jesus and Lazarus, while others were putting their faith in Jesus and being saved. John now takes us from perfume to praise.

Praise – John 12:12-13

In verses 12-13 praise was offered to Jesus. They took palm branches and shouted, *“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel!”* Palm branches were a symbol of victory. Hosanna means. ***“O save! an exclamation of adoration.”*** Blessed means ***“to speak well of, to praise.”*** To come in the name of the Lord as Jesus does is to represent God at the highest level. John Calvin writes – ***“By him God has manifested himself fully. We ought therefore to begin with him as the Head....”*** They refer to him as the head, when they call him *“the King of Israel!”*

This is high praise and honour given to Jesus. But what sort of victory, what type of king do they think Jesus is? They were under Roman rule and longed for victory, longed to be saved from their domination. They wanted him to be that kind of king. They thought he was the long awaited Messiah which he was, but not the Messiah they wanted. They instead wanted Christ to be what they wanted or expected him to be. The praise would fade. It would go from crown him to crucify him.

Thomas Watson, 1620-1686, Puritan preacher and author wrote – ***“Praising God is one of the highest and purest acts of religion. In prayer we act like men; in praise we act like angels.”*** Prayer will end when Christ returns. There will be no need to pray as we will be in his presence, but praise will continue. In Revelation 4, 7, 11, 19 John recorded the eternal praise that was given to God by those around the throne.

Prophecy – John 12:14-19

John recorded that Jesus was greeted with praise initially. We keep in mind that John, along with the other disciples, was an eyewitness to all that he writes about Jesus and the events surrounding his life. In 1 John 1:1 John wrote, *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim*

concerning the Word of life.” That is the kind of sensory testimony that authenticates what we read. John heard, saw and touched.

Here John saw prophesy fulfilled that day as Jesus found a young donkey and rode it as verse 14 testifies. John in verse 15 quotes Zechariah 9:9, *“Do not be afraid, O daughter of Zion; see your king is coming seated on a donkey’s colt.”* The full quote describes him as *“righteous and having salvation.”* John applied this OT prophesy to Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ. All commentaries agree, that John’s application of Zechariah 9:9 to Jesus Christ is correct. Christ, meaning Messiah, was his title, but it became his name.

He was/is righteous and brought us salvation which he alone had. Jesus also fulfilled the prophesy of Genesis 3:15, Micah 5:2, Zechariah 9:9 & especially Isaiah 7:14, 9:1-9 and 52:13- 53:12 i.e. his coming & his cross. John says it was after Jesus was glorified that the disciples realized these things had been prophesied about him. When they did understand these things they were empowered to go make disciples by preaching what they knew to be true, authentic and life-changing as the gospel is. Paul said of the gospel in Romans 1:16 that, *“it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.”* The power of the gospel was demonstrated on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and throughout the book of Acts as recorded by Luke. It has not lost any of its saving power to do the same today. One reason for that is that Jesus made it a priority in his life.

Priority – John 12:20-26

John says some Greeks came to see Jesus. But they never got to see him. Jesus had a more important priority. Here Jesus is narrowing his focus, his thoughts, his intent, his energy on what he had come to do. The time for preaching, teaching and miracles was over. He wasn’t being rude but resolute. In Luke 9:51 Luke recorded, *“As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.”* His resolve reflected his priority which was the cross.

In verse 24 he described it allegorically – *“I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”* His priority was the gospel, his falling to the

ground, his death and resurrection. Its effect or result would be to produce many seeds. i.e. a bumper crop of souls brought to faith by the electing grace of God, and to salvation and to eternal life. That was his priority and it still is.

Matthew Henry, 1662-1714, wrote, *“The Captain of our salvation, bringing many sons to glory by virtue of his death, & being made perfect by sufferings, shall be celebrated forever with the admiring praises of saints and angels.”* That is our being called to praise forever. *Soli Deo Gloria.* Amen.