

## John 12: 12-28

### Introduction

Palm Sunday: the day Jesus came into Jerusalem and was greeted as the king

He was not the king they wanted him to be: a king on a seat

He was the king they needed him to be: a kernel of wheat

### The Passage

#### I. The king they wanted him to be: “a king on a seat”

##### A. The crowds (12:13-14, 17-18)

1. Background: They were living under Roman occupation and had been waiting for the Messiah for hundreds of years prophesied for hundreds of years. They were looking for a mighty king to overthrow the Roman rule and establish his throne in Jerusalem.

2. v. 17-18: Jesus’ raising of Lazarus is the event that sparks their excitement

3. v. 13-14

a. Palm branches were a national symbol of Israel

b. “Hosanna” means “Save please!” and came to be an expression of praise (“Here comes salvation!”)

c. “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” comes from Psalm 118 which came to be a Messianic psalm, and they clearly interpret it that way (“blessed is the king of Israel”)

4. Jesus’ riding on a donkey both fulfills their expectations (he is fulfilling Zechariah 9:9 which predicts the coming king) and subverts their expectations (he is not riding on a war horse but on a donkey because he does not come to defeat his enemies through war but through the cross)

##### B. The disciples

v. 16: they don’t understand that prophecy is being fulfilled

They are probably caught up in the excitement and wondering what it might mean for them personally when their rabbi becomes king.

##### C. The Pharisees

v. 19: They are thinking politically but they are afraid all this excitement will draw Roman attention and Roman retaliation (see 11:47-48)

#### II. The king they needed him to be: “a kernel of wheat”

##### A. Jesus’ glorification (v. 23)

1. The crowds would assume this would mean his coronation on a throne

2. But his glorification takes place on a cross

That’s where who he is will shine most clearly

##### B. A kernel of wheat (v. 24)

1. The image: A kernel of wheat can produce an amazing harvest but it has to die and be buried first.

2. Jesus’ life: his death on the cross will produce an amazing harvest (forgiveness and life for many people through the ages)

a. This means temporary rejection by the people

- b. But ultimately his death will draw many more people (see v 32)
- C. Hating life in order to keep it (v. 25)
  - 1. The general concept
    - a. “loving” our lives = trying to protect, preserve, hold onto them even when there’s something greater calling us to give ourselves over to it
    - b. “hating” our lives = being willing to give our lives up for something greater
  - 2. Jesus’ situation: he “hates” his live
    - v. 27: He could protect and preserve his life but he’s willing to give it up for something greater: his father’s glory. His father has a beautiful plan to save many lives, but it involves Jesus dying, so Jesus is willing to do that in order to glorify his Father
  - 3. Jesus receives the promise: he “keeps his life for eternal life”
    - See Philippians 2:6-11: Jesus gave up an earthly throne to go to the cross and die, and in response the Father gives him a heavenly throne for all eternity
- D. Imagine if Jesus hadn’t gone to the cross
  - 1. There would not have been a huge harvest. Jesus could have conquered the Romans but human hearts would have remained unchanged and unforgiven
  - 2. Jesus would have had a nice throne in Jerusalem for 40 years but he never would have received a heavenly throne for all eternity.

### III. The king’s call to his disciples

- A. The call (v. 26): “follow in my footsteps”
  - 1. He is on his way to the cross, and he calls us to “come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” (Mk 8:34)
  - 2. He’s inviting us into his way of life:
    - Become like kernels of wheat that give yourselves over to God
    - Don’t protect yourselves but live for God’s glory
- B. The first disciples’ response
  - 1. At first, they didn’t understand this
    - See Mark 8:31-33, 9:30-37, 10:32-45
  - 2. After his resurrection, they understood this
    - They all gave up their lives for the sake of the gospel and they produce a harvest of many converts
- C. Our response today
  - 1. See 2 Corinthians 5:14-15: “Christ died for all . . . and he died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”
  - 2. We often think that Jesus’ radical call is only for “all-star” Christians but that’s the call he makes to every single person.

## Conclusion

I. Where does your desire to protect, preserve, and control your life get in way of living for Christ?

II. Christ gives us three promises when we give our lives to him

- A. We will produce fruit (v. 24)
- B. We will gain eternal life (v. 25)
- C. We will be honored by the Father (v. 26)

III. We learn to give our lives over to something not by focusing on what we have to deny but on focusing on the greatness of the one we give our lives over to.

## **Discussion Questions**

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. How did Sunday's service add to or change your understanding of that original Palm Sunday, if at all? How did it add to or change your understanding of who Jesus is?
3. Describe in your own words what Jesus meant when he talked about "loving" your life vs. "hating" your life in v. 25.
4. Where does your desire to protect, preserve, or control your life get in way of living for Christ more radically?
5. On Sunday it was suggested that we learn to give our lives over to something not by focusing on what we have to deny and give up but by focusing on the greatness of the object we want to pursue. In light of that, if someone said, "your only task in life is to develop a deep passion for God and his glory," how would you go about living your life? What things would you do? What habits would you cultivate?