

John 11:55-12:26 “The World Has Gone After Him”
Zechariah 9
Psalm 118

August 2, 2020

Zechariah 9 starts by saying that the LORD “has an eye on mankind
and on all the tribes of Israel.”

That is the context for the call for Jerusalem to rejoice and shout,
because your king is coming!
Your king is coming – just like Solomon came riding David’s donkey!

In Zechariah’s day, the exile had been over for more than a century –
and yet, he says “I will set your prisoners free” –
because even though the exile was over –
the exile wasn’t over!

The Son of David was not sitting on the throne!
There was no king in Jerusalem!

And so Zechariah says that the LORD will appear over them –
and he will sound the trumpet and march forth against his foes.

And in that day, the LORD will “speak peace to the nations.”
That day came when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

And Psalm 118 is what they sang on that day.

In Psalm 118, the first person singular is the voice of the Son of David (v5-21).
So, as we sing Psalm 118, we are joining our voices with the voice of Jesus.
Jesus is the one who comes to his holy city in triumph.
We sing with him – because he has united us to himself.

That’s why Psalm 118 moves from the first person singular to the first person plural.
“This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.
This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! (v23-25)

Because Jesus has triumphed,
therefore we sing with him.
(and not surprisingly, this is the part that the people sang on Palm Sunday!)
“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!”

But notice what comes in the next verse:
“Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar!”

Jesus understood that!
He knew what comes next:
he must be the sacrifice that is offered to take away the sin of the world!

Sing Psalm 118
Read John 11:55-12:26

Introduction: “They Were Looking for Jesus” at the Passover (11:55-57)

⁵⁵ Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. ⁵⁶ They were looking for^[1] Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?” ⁵⁷ Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

I suggested last time that John 11 is the hinge upon which John’s gospel turns.

It brings to a conclusion Jesus public teaching,
and it foreshadows his own resurrection.

In the raising of Lazarus, Jesus demonstrates that the promise to Ezekiel
of the raising of the dry bones has come at last.

God is going to do all that he promised to do at the end of history,
now, in the middle of history.

The raising of Lazarus, then, reveals the glory of Christ,
in the same way that the transfiguration reveals his glory in the other gospels.

And we saw that the “prophet” who explained the meaning of this
was none other than Caiaphas—the unbelieving high priest. (11:49-52)

Caiaphas was right.

Indeed it was better that Jesus should die for the nation!

But not only for the Jews!

John points out that Jesus will die so that he might

“gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.”

Jesus left Judea for a time, and stayed in Ephraim,
but now the Passover is at hand.

His time is drawing nigh.

And the Jews were looking for him.

They wondered whether he would dare to come this year!

As we’ll see in this passage *everyone* is looking for Jesus!

Either they are looking for him – *to arrest him* –

or they are looking for him – *to follow him*.

But *everyone* is going to have to decide what to do with Jesus!

1. “For the Day of My Burial” – The Anointing of Jesus as a Lesson in How to Use Money (12:1-11)

a. The Anointing of Jesus (v1-3)

12 Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. ³ Mary therefore took a pound^[a] of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Six days before Passover Jesus came to Bethany.

We are not finished yet with the story of Lazarus and his sisters.

Jesus returns to Bethany before the Passover to see his friends.

Back in 11:2 we heard that Mary was the one who anointed Jesus' feet.

Now we hear the story.

There was a dinner held in Jesus' honor.

Martha served.

In Luke 10 she was chided for her busyness, and urged to listen like Mary.

But now she delights to honor her Lord—

the one who raises the dead and gives them life.

Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at the table.

A short time before he was wrapped in linen, cold as stone.

Now he is sitting beside the one who raised him from the dead.

But Mary? What does she do?

She took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard,

and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair.

Mary understood exactly what Jesus had done.

Jesus' final sign had become clear to at least one person.

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead,

he doomed himself to death—

not just because the Pharisees were plotting to kill him—

but because only through his death

could Jesus' words to her sister could come true.

“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die,
yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.”

Lazarus, her brother, was alive—but he was going to die again.

Mary had indeed seen the glory of God revealed in Jesus on that day,
and what she saw grieved her.

Because she knew that the only way for Jesus' words to come true,
was if Jesus himself died.

How did she figure it out?

We don't know for certain —

But she came to Jesus that night with an ointment used to anoint the dead for burial,

and she poured it on his feet,
and wiped his feet with her hair.

b. Judas Objects: Give to the Poor! (or Me!) (v4-6)

⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, ⁵ “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii^[b] and given to the poor?” ⁶ He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.

In the midst of the beauty of that moment, with the sweet perfume filling the air,
we hear a noisy braying coming from the other side of the room:

“Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?”

Judas.

He would have to spoil the moment.

And John adds that Judas’ concern was not really for the poor,
but that as keeper of the moneybag he wanted to help himself to the cash!

300 denarii would be a year’s wages for a laborer.

In other words, this is worth \$30-40,000.

You can see right away that this is *extravagant!*

Jesus replied: “Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial.

The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.”

c. “You Do Not Always Have Me”: How Jesus Thinks About Money (v7-8)

⁷ Jesus said, “Leave her alone, so that she may keep it^[c] for the day of my burial. ⁸ For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.”

“The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.”

Interesting statement.

It sort of cuts both ways, doesn’t it?

On the one hand it affirms the importance of caring for the poor,
but on the other it reminds us of the central importance of Jesus.

We *should be* extravagant in our devotion to Jesus.

All that we have should be devoted to his service.

That will often mean giving to the poor.

Giving to the poor here is treated as the obvious, ordinary thing to do!

Every decent human being will give regularly and generously to the poor.

That’s what we do – because we see in our fellow human being
a reflection of the image of God.

And when we see the image of God in trouble,

our hearts go out to them...
except for Judas...
Ironically, Judas does not actually care about the poor.

You often see this:
people who are only concerned for their own power, wealth, and influence
will often make appeals “for the poor” –
by which they can increase their own power, wealth, and influence...

That’s why Jesus says, “you do not always have me.”
If you understood who I am, Judas,
you would not have grumbled about this extravagance!
You would have fallen down on your face and worshiped me!

But those extravagant times are also extraordinary times.
They are not the ordinary things that we do.
How often in Jesus’ life did this happen?
Maybe twice (the episode in Luke seems to be a rather different context).

But the point for you and me is that we need to be devoted to Jesus.
We should be regular in our care for the poor –
after all, we will always have the poor with us.
We will never eradicate poverty.
After all, poverty is not just about “lack of stuff.”
You could give everyone a universal basic income –
and you would not eradicate poverty.

Because poverty has – at its root – our failure to love God and neighbor.

Mary has understood the point of the raising of Lazarus.
It points forward to Jesus’ own death.
And she wants to be ready.

The Pharisees also understand the point of the raising of Lazarus–
in their own way.

d. The Plot Widens (v9-11)

⁹ When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus^[d] was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, ¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

And as the crowds gather to see Jesus,
the Pharisees notice that the crowds are also gathering to see Lazarus,

and so they determine to put him to death as well.

This reminds us—yet again—of the centrality of the raising of Lazarus in John’s gospel.
It is so important that Lazarus even gets second billing (ahead of all the disciples)
on “Jerusalem’s Most Wanted.”
Lazarus is a marked man.
Because on account of him many of the Jews were believing in Jesus.

What we see here is how the plot widens.
At first, they just wanted to kill Jesus.
Now they want to kill Lazarus.

Eventually – in the book of Acts –
we will hear of a concerted effort to kill all those who confess that Jesus is Lord.

The plot widens – but so also does the redemptive significance of Christ’s death!
And this is where our text goes as John recounts the Triumphal Entry
of Jesus to Jerusalem.
And in verses 12-26 we hear of a variety of responses to Jesus –
the crowd – the disciples – the Pharisees – and even some Greeks –
some Gentiles who came to faith in Jesus.

2. “Look, the World Has Gone After Him” – The Triumphal Entry and the Gentiles (12:12-26)

a. The Crowd Proclaims Jesus as King (v12-15)

¹² *The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” ¹⁴ And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,*
¹⁵ *“Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!”*

The next day (and this day covers the rest of chapter 12) is the Triumphal Entry.
We’re not finished with Lazarus yet.
The crowd that had been there at Lazarus’ tomb is testifying to Jesus (17)
Having revealed his glory in the raising of Lazarus,
Jesus now ascends to Jerusalem in Messianic glory,
with the crowds proclaiming that he is indeed the Anointed Son of David!

This is what is supposed to happen at the end of history!
The Messiah is to be brought in glory to the City of David,
ascending with majesty to Zion.
They sing Psalm 118 to him.

We use this in our worship regularly.

“Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the LORD.

This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it...” (19-20)

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!

We bless you from the house of the LORD.

The LORD is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us...” (26-27)

They even call him “the King of Israel!”

And Jesus comes to his own city sitting on a donkey,

as it is written in Zechariah 9,

“Fear not, daughter of Zion;

behold your king is coming,

sitting on a donkey’s colt!” (9:9)

As we heard in Zechariah,

the King comes to Jerusalem to bring peace

through the blood of the covenant.

The tradition of the Son of David riding on a donkey goes back to Solomon.

When he was crowned king in 1 Kings 1:33,

he came to Jerusalem riding on King David’s own mule.

While it is a sign of humility,

it is also a sign of royalty.

Jesus comes as the anointed Son of David to reign over his own city.

He came to his own,

but his own did not receive him.

He ascended to Jerusalem with glory,

but only a temporary and fleeting glory.

This was only a picture of the real ascension.

This was only a foretaste of the praise that Jesus would receive when he sat down
on the throne of his father David at the right hand of God!

John also was a witness to that in Revelation 5:

John beholds in a vision the ascension of Christ,

and he hears the hosts of heaven singing not Psalm 118,

but a new victory song:

“Worthy are you to take the scrolls and to open its seals,

For you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God

From every tribe and language and people and nation;

And you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God

And they shall reign on the earth.” (5:9-10)

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name,

he gave the right to become children of God.

His disciples at first did not understand the Triumphal Entry.

They saw the glory and praise that was given to Jesus,
and no doubt they thought that this was the beginning of the end of history!

They were right.

But if they thought that Jesus was going to be enthroned in Jerusalem –
boy were they wrong!

The glory that Jesus received at the Triumphal Entry was not true glory.

It was only after Jesus was glorified that they remembered
that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.

What does it mean “when Jesus was glorified”? (v16)

Hold that thought.

b. The Response of the Disciples, the Crowd, and the Pharisees (v16-19)

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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. ¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”

Because before John answers that, he has to draw our attention to two things.

First he reminds us of Lazarus.

The crowd that had been with Jesus when he called Lazarus out of the tomb
and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness.

And the reason for the crowds at the Triumphal Entry
was because they had heard of this sign.

The Pharisees grumble about this, and unwittingly prophesy again:
“Look, the world has gone after him”

And once again their prophecy has world-wide implications.

Because after Jesus comes into the city,
the first people who come to him are some Greeks.

The nations are coming to Jesus already!

They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee.

They would have wanted to talk to someone in Greek,
so they would have gone to someone with a Galilean accent.

And they say, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

Caiaphas’s prophecy—and that of the Pharisees—is coming true.

The world (the kosmos) is going after Jesus.

Andrew and Philip then come to Jesus and tell him that some Greeks want to see him.

c. “Sir, We Wish to See Jesus”: the Greeks Come to Jesus (v20-26)

²⁰ Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. ²¹ So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” ²² Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³ And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ 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.

It might appear that Jesus blows them off.

After all, he doesn't say anything about them, does he?

But John says that Jesus answers them.

How does he do it?

It is now—and only now—that Jesus says,

“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”

All through John's gospel,

Jesus has been protesting that his hour has not yet come.

In John 2 he tells his mother, “my hour has not yet come.”

In John 4 he tells the Samaritan woman that the hour is coming, and now is,
when the true worshipers will worship in Spirit and truth.

In John 5 he says that “the hour is coming, and now is,
when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God,
and those who hear will live.”

In John 7, and again in John 8, plots to arrest Jesus fail,
because his hour had not yet come.

And in John 7, Jesus tells his brothers that his time has not yet come.

Now, finally, Jesus says that his hour has come.

We will look more next week at what it means that Jesus' hour has come,
but for our purposes today, we must simply see two things:

1) Jesus' hour is bound up with the raising of Lazarus

2) Jesus' hour is bound up with the coming of the Greeks.

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

What does it mean for the Son of Man to be glorified?

He revealed his glory through the raising of Lazarus.

How will he now be glorified?

Keep following Jesus.

Listen to what he says:

“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.”

The Son of Man is glorified in his death.

Because it is only through death that he can bear fruit.

It is only through death that he can give life to his people.

He must be lifted up on the cross,

an ascension of a different sort than anyone was expecting.

That's what Mary saw in the raising of her brother.

Everyone else thinks that the raising of Lazarus

signifies the coming of the Son of David to rule in Jerusalem,

overthrowing the Gentiles in his wrath.

But Mary sees that it signifies his own death.

These Greeks are drawn to this Jesus,

because they hear in him the voice of the Good Shepherd.

“My sheep know my voice!”

Do you know the voice of Jesus?

Do you hear him calling you?!

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

But in that hour Jesus turns to his disciples and says to them:

“Whoever loves his life loses it,

and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

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.” (25-26)

Jesus is about to be glorified through death.

You know, by now, that there is no path to glory except the one that Jesus trod.

If you would cling to your life in this age, then you will lose it in the age to come.

But if you despise the life of this age, then you will live eternally.

Children,

I want you to hear this.

Jesus says that if you love your life now, then you won't live forever.

You may be thinking, “I'm only 8 years old, I love life!”

Jesus says you have to follow him,

and the only way to follow Jesus is to put to death

your self-centered ways of thinking.

After all, that was the attitude that Judas had.

He wanted lots of stuff—so he even stole from Jesus and the other disciples.

Many years ago there was a man named Augustine of Hippo,

who said that we should use and enjoy things,

but only love God.

And the only way to enjoy things is to use them in the way that God says.

Sharing your things with others.

Thinking of what they want.

And above all, loving Jesus Christ our Lord.

Because the one who serves Jesus, will be with Jesus forever.

The one who serves him will be honored by the Father.