

"The World Has Gone After Him"

Thomas Robinson, January 24, 2010

John 12:1-26

¹ **Six days before the Passover**, Jesus came to Bethany, where **Lazarus lived**, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² Here a **dinner** was given in Jesus' honor. **Martha** served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him.

³ Then **Mary** took about a pint of pure nard, an **expensive perfume**; she poured it on **Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair**. And the **house was filled with the fragrance** of the perfume.

⁴ But one of his disciples, **Judas Iscariot**, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵ *"Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages (300 denarii)."* ⁶ He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

⁷ **"Leave her alone,"** Jesus replied. *"It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial."* ⁸ **You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."**

⁹ Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ So the **chief priests** made plans to **kill Lazarus as well**, ¹¹ for on account of him many of the Jews were **going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him**.

¹² The next day the great **crowd** that had come for the **festival** heard that **Jesus** was on his way to **Jerusalem**. ¹³ They took **palm branches** and went out to meet him, shouting, **"Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"**

"Blessed is the king of Israel!" [Psalm 118:25-26]

¹⁴ Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written:

¹⁵ **"Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion;**

see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." [Zech. 9:9; Isa 62:11]

¹⁶ At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after **Jesus was glorified** did they realize that these things had been **written** about him and that these things had been **done** to him.

¹⁷ Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to **spread the word** (testify). ¹⁸ Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him.

¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to one another, **"See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"**

²⁰ Now there were some **Greeks** among those who went up to worship at the festival.

²¹ They came to **Philip**, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. **"Sir,"** they said, **"we would like to see Jesus."**

²² Philip went to tell **Andrew**; Andrew and Philip in turn told **Jesus**.

²³ Jesus replied,

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

²⁴ *Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed (alone).*

But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

²⁵ *Those who love their life will lose it,*

while those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

²⁶ *Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me."*

Humanity Going After Jesus

God loved the world so much that he gave his unique Son (3:16). John often describes simple basic responses: believing or not; light or darkness; staying or going away. But John also wants us to see vividly the swirl of human life around Jesus as he approaches the cross. It is this varied world of complex people that God loves.

The Pharisees (v.19) expressed frustration, but said more than they knew. Jesus sparks a response, a self-defining/identifying choice. The world goes after Jesus: to arrest him, serve him, march with him, ask him to save us, make him king, kill him, manipulate him, figure him out, love him, explain him away, fall at his feet, etc. Where are we among the crowds? Who do we turn out to be when Jesus comes?

Among Disciples, Friends, and Betrayers

Passover week. In spite of arrest warrant (11:57), Jesus comes to Bethany to a banquet with Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. Brave, bold thing for them to do. Lazarus honored with Jesus, Martha the chef, Mary will give an extravagant gift of great devotion. Jesus raised Lazarus. They will boldly celebrate Jesus to draw people to him. So the dinner unfolds: celebration, fellowship, good food, great gratitude/devotion.

Judas has his own agenda that Jesus must fit: anti-Roman messiah, anti-aristocracy, seize power in the name of the poor. No dying, surrender. He scorns Mary's gift; tries to take it from her by challenging its morality, exaggerating its money value.

Jesus defends Mary and gives a new vision of the meaning of her gift - his own death! Crowds come to see Jesus and Lazarus. Faith stirs. Chief priests will kill Lazarus!

Savior, King, and Mystery

Passover crowd, celebrating deliverance, looking for deliverance. Leaders fearing uprising, zealots wanting to spark it. Jesus is coming! Crowds meet him with palm branches (as in Maccabean days). They sing the Passover Hallel, Psalm 118, victory. "Save us!" "King of Israel!" Jesus is powerful. He raised Lazarus. Testimony about the sign sparks powerful expectations. Political explosive. March on temple.

Jesus chooses a different symbol: donkey colt. Yes he's a king, but humble, no battle, peace to the nations. Salvation deeper/higher than expected. His disciples don't understand. They must see the whole event of death and resurrection first.

Greeks Seeking Jesus – Glory for the World

The great temple and message of Israel attracted people to learn about God. Even they learn about Jesus and seek him through his disciples, Philip and Andrew. This is a story not just for Jerusalem and Jesus' own nation but for all the world.

For Jesus, it is a sign! The hour has come (anticipated since his first sign, 2:4). He will be glorified and God glorified. More than people hoped for will be fulfilled.

But how? Jesus unexpectedly points to a seed of wheat, planted, "dying." Not just one man changing Jerusalem regime, but changing all human and cosmic history. What happens will not be the present victory we envisioned but far greater victory.

Jesus challenges his disciples to follow him. Cling to life and you lose it. Give it away and you keep it forever - like Mary's gift. Follow Jesus. Follow him into service, into death, into resurrection life. There is the glory, kingship, messiahship of Jesus. In giving life/serving his disciples experience the eternal life of God in themselves. There God honors those who have learned life from serving Jesus.