

## **Prince of Peace** (John 11:45-12:24)

Jesus didn't enter Jerusalem as a conquering king on a warhorse. Instead, Jesus rode a donkey - a humble burden bearer, a picture of what He had come to do. The hour has come for the Prince of Peace to accomplish His mission.

**Catch the Context:** When we last left our story John had recorded the most significant sign proving that Jesus was the Lord of life, as he raised Lazarus from the dead, after being tucked away in his tomb for 4 days!

**John 11:45-48** (CSB) <sup>45</sup> Therefore, many of the Jews who came to Mary and saw what he did believed in him. <sup>46</sup> But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. <sup>47</sup> So the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin and were saying, "What are we going to do since this man is doing many signs? <sup>48</sup> If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

**The Sanhedrin** was the ruling Jewish authority but they were under the authority of the Romans. These 71 men, presided over by the high priest, decided legal matters, much like our Supreme Court. These Jewish representatives, included **chief priests** (Sadducees) and **Pharisees** (minority but highly influential with the Jewish people), were accountable to the Roman authorities. **The Sanhedrin** that later sentences Jesus and approaches the Romans asking for capital punishment.

These men have a problem. His name is Jesus. They can't dilute the reality of the **many signs** Jesus had done, including raising Lazarus from the dead. They were concerned that this would cause **everyone** to **believe in him**, and result in **the Romans** coming to put down what could be perceived as a religious revolt. This would likely remove them from leadership and take away the freedoms Jews had within the Roman occupation of Israel.

*Either Jesus dies OR the Romans come in to take away the authority of the council, and possibly destroy the nation.*

This was a legitimate concern as this was exactly what happened about 40 years later when the Romans crushed the revolting Jews, slaughtered the innocent Jews, and left Jerusalem and its temple in a smoking pile of rubble.

So, they came up with a plan.

**John 11:49-53** <sup>49</sup> One of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! <sup>50</sup> You're not considering that it is to your advantage that one man should die for the people rather than the whole nation perish." <sup>51</sup> He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year **he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation**, <sup>52</sup> and not for the nation only, but also to unite the scattered children of God. <sup>53</sup> So from that day on they plotted to kill him.

**Caiaphas**, the **high priest** (ruled for a total of 19 years, A.D. 18-36<sup>1</sup>), **prophesied** (i.e. spoke for God) - **that Jesus was going to die for the nation**. These leaders, who **plotted to kill** Jesus, didn't even realize that they are playing right into the plan of God, written hundreds of years before (**Is. 53 & Ps. 22**) - the Messiah **WAS going to die for the nation**. Listen to the language of Isaiah written 700 years before.

**Isaiah 53:6** (CSB) <sup>6</sup> We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way; and **the LORD [Yahweh] has punished him for the iniquity of us all**.

But notice that Jesus wasn't just **going to die for the nation, but also to unite the scattered children of God**. While this certainly applies to the Jewish people scattered abroad, it also refers to the Gentiles that Jesus mentioned earlier.

**John 10:16** (CSB) <sup>16</sup> But I have **other sheep that are not from this sheep pen**; I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. Then there will be one flock, one shepherd.

Of course, God's sending the Son to die for not just the Jews, but the WORLD, is a theme that runs throughout this writing. Remember John the Baptist early on who pointed to Jesus and said,

**John 1:29b** (CSB) "Here is **the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**"

The Samaritans (who had a long feud with the Jews), even recognized Jesus as **"the Savior of the WORLD."** (Jn 4:42)

<sup>1</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *John: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer et al., Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 281.

And now, with the political heat turned up BUT not yet time for His sacrifice...

**John 11:54-55** <sup>54</sup> Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews but departed from there to the countryside near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and he stayed there with the disciples. <sup>55</sup> [Now] the Jewish **Passover was near**, and many went up to Jerusalem from the country to purify themselves before the Passover.

**Ephraim** was over 12 miles north of Jerusalem, a buffer zone between Jesus and his enemies.<sup>2</sup> But He wouldn't be there for long because **Passover was near**. During this time, Jerusalem was packed with hundreds of thousands of Passover pilgrims. They arrived **before the Passover** and went through 7 days of purification before slaughtering the Passover lambs (Num 9:6-12; 2 Chr 30:17-19).

Those who entered Jerusalem heard the buzz around town, just down the road in Bethany, Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead after being in the tomb for 4 days!

**John 11:56-57** <sup>56</sup> They were looking for Jesus and asking one another as they stood in the temple: "What do you think? He won't come to the festival, will he?" <sup>57</sup> The chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should report it so that they could arrest him.

As we enter into John chapter 12, we are now less than one week away from Jesus' brutal death. Jesus is now a wanted man.

**John 12:1-7** (CSB) <sup>1</sup> Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, the one Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> So they gave a dinner for him there; Martha was serving them, and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with him. <sup>3</sup> Then Mary took a pound of perfume, pure and expensive nard, anointed Jesus's feet, and wiped his feet with her hair. So the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. <sup>4</sup> Then one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot (who was about to betray him), said, <sup>5</sup> "Why wasn't this perfume sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" <sup>6</sup> He didn't say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. He was in charge of the money-bag and would steal part of what was put in it. <sup>7</sup> Jesus answered, "Leave her alone; she has kept it for the day of my burial. <sup>8</sup> For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

**Bethany** was just 1.5 miles from Jerusalem. All 3 siblings served Jesus in different ways. **Martha** was serving the food. **Lazarus** talked with Jesus during dinner. And **Mary** did something known to John's audience - something he had alluded to earlier in chapter **11:2**. Women did not let down their hair in public, so the only one who saw a woman's hair was her husband.<sup>3</sup> But here was Mary, wiping Jesus' feet with her precious hair. With this large amount of perfume the entire **house was filled with the fragrance**.

### ☀️ **Kent Hughes:**

***Martha** was serving with all she had. **Mary** was pouring out all she had before Jesus in compassionate, selfless worship. **Lazarus** was emblematic of new life in Christ. This is a remarkably complete picture and a microcosm of what happens when Jesus Christ touches the lives of those around him.<sup>4</sup>*

This is a family forever changed by their relationship with Jesus, the Messiah. But Mary's extravagant demonstration of love (costing close to 1 year's wage for the average worker), was not appreciated by all. **Judas Iscariot** thinks it's a waste, since he was a **thief**. While Judas might have fooled the other disciples, there's no doubt that Jesus knew the intention of Judas. **Judas was a deceptive 'disciple' who lacked CHARACTER.**

🕒 **Character** is who you are when everyone is looking AND when no one (but God) is looking.

❓ What compromises do you make when no one else is around? Would YOU steal, cheat, lie, lust, speak evil, or ingest a mind altering substance if you knew you wouldn't get caught?

🕒 **Mary, Martha, Lazarus...and Judas.** Which one are you more like - the folks forever changed by Jesus - pouring out their lives to serve their Prince of Peace OR...are you more like Judas, a deceptive disciple - putting on a good show when others are watching, but your heart isn't all in?

**Leave her alone; she has kept it for the day of my burial.** Jesus confronts & corrects the thief who will **betray** Him, the very action that would lead to His death...and **burial**. This pre-anointing foreshadows Jesus death that was just around the corner.

<sup>2</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 423-424.

<sup>3</sup> Gary M. Burge, *John, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 339.

<sup>4</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *John: That You May Believe, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 295.

**John 12:9-11** <sup>9</sup> Then a large crowd of the Jews learned he was there. **They came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus**, the one he had raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup> But the chief priests had decided to kill Lazarus also, <sup>11</sup> because **he was the reason many of the Jews were deserting them and believing in Jesus**.

What Jesus did for Lazarus couldn't be denied. *His very life - breathing, eating, talking - was a living testimony to the power and authority of Jesus*. The **chief priests** - family members of Caiaphas - decided to kill both Jesus and Lazarus because of the power of his testimony. Now wanted posters with 2 names littered Jerusalem: Jesus & Lazarus. With all this heat, would Jesus show up to the Passover celebration (Jn 11:56)? Here comes the answer.

**John 12:12-13** <sup>12</sup> The next day, when the large crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, <sup>13</sup> they took palm branches and went out to meet him. They kept shouting: **"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!"**

The people **went out to meet** Jesus and usher Him back into the city (like a victorious king returning from battle in their day). **Palm branches** had long been a symbol of freedom for the Jewish people (used in the celebration of the temple rededication during the Maccabean revolt and later stamped on the coins minted by the Jewish rebels during both major wars with Rome.)<sup>5</sup> The people expected that **the King of Israel** was about to take over!

**Hosanna** is an Aramaic phrase meaning *"save, I pray."* By Jesus' time it had become a well known *phrase of praise to God*.<sup>6</sup> The people in Jerusalem are actually *quoting the Hallel from Ps. 118*.

**Psalm 118:25-26** (LEB) <sup>25</sup> O Yahweh, **please save**; O Yahweh, please grant success. <sup>26</sup> *Blessed is he who comes in the name of Yahweh. We bless you from the house of Yahweh.*

But Jesus didn't ride in as a conquering king on a warhorse. Instead,

**John 12:14-18** <sup>14</sup> Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written: <sup>15</sup> ***Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion. Look, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt.*** <sup>16</sup> His disciples did not understand these things at first. However, **when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him** and that they had done these things to him. <sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, the crowd, which had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify. <sup>18</sup> This is also why the crowd met him, because they heard he had done this sign.

At first, Jesus' own disciples didn't understand what this represented.

- A donkey was not considered an animal that carried royalty in Jesus' day, but it was a royal animal before & during King David's reign.<sup>7</sup>
- The donkey was seen as **a servant, a burden-bearer** carrying much weight for others - What a picture of the ONE who would carry our burdens!

#### 🌟 **Kent Hughes:**

*"He chose the donkey because it beautifully portrayed both his position as King and his character as servant."<sup>8</sup>*

- This is a **fulfillment of Zech. 9:9** [written over 500 years before the birth of Jesus.]

**Zechariah 9:9** (CSB) <sup>9</sup> Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout in triumph, Daughter **Jerusalem!** Look, **your King is coming to you**; he is righteous and victorious, **humble and riding on a donkey**, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

**The crowd, which had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead.** These people KNEW that if they **continued to testify**, it could cost them dearly. Yet even in the midst of persecution, they wouldn't stay quiet about what Jesus had done!

Jesus is more than a conquering king; He is the **Prince of Peace**, the **burden-bearer** who will give His life as a ransom for many. The people in Jerusalem didn't understand that just yet. They expected Him to set up His kingdom in Israel.

**John 12:19-22** <sup>19</sup> Then the Pharisees said to one another, "You see? You've accomplished nothing. Look, **the world has gone after him!**" <sup>20</sup> Now some Greeks were among those who went up to worship at the festival. <sup>21</sup> So they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and requested of him, "Sir, **we want to see Jesus.**" <sup>22</sup> Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> Gary M. Burge, John, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 341.

<sup>6</sup> Biblical Studies Press, The NET Bible First Edition; Bible, English, NET Bible.; The NET Bible (Biblical Studies Press, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> R. Kent Hughes, Luke: That You May Know the Truth, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 239-240.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

And then John gives an example of how legitimate this was. Jesus was impacting more than just Jews.

**John 12:20-22** (CSB) <sup>20</sup> Now some Greeks were among those who went up to worship at the festival. <sup>21</sup> So they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and requested of him, "Sir, **we want to see Jesus.**" <sup>22</sup> Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

Like *Cornelius* (Acts 10) and the *Ethiopian eunuch* (Acts 8), these Greeks were God-fearers (not yet full converts to the Jewish faith), but they **want to see Jesus** for themselves. Could it be that these Greeks are the first of the "other sheep" Jesus had mentioned in **John 10:16**, the first of many Gentiles who are going to seek out and follow the Prince of Peace? Jesus will task His Jewish followers take the message, not just to Jews, but to the world.

### The Hour Has Come

**John 12:23-24** <sup>23</sup> Jesus replied to them, "**The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.**" <sup>24</sup> Truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But **if it dies, it produces much fruit.**

Many times before John's Gospel notes that Jesus **hour** had not yet come (John 2:4, 7:3, 8:20). But now...**the hour has come** and Jesus is about to accomplish the mission He has come for. The Prince of Peace - who was about to **DIE** for others. That DEATH would **produce much fruit** - bringing LIFE to millions more like Lazarus, Mary, & Martha, people who are forever changed - *born again servants who pour out their lives to bless Jesus and point others to Him!*

- ➡ And THEIR TASK is now OUR TASK. We are to testify that JESUS HAS RISEN and tell others of God's goodness to us!
- ➡ When is the last time to shared YOUR TESTIMONY with another person? This week I challenge you to PRAY for, LOOK for, and TAKE the opportunity God gives you, to share with another.

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\* **Want to talk further?** Please contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Justin** (704-618-6144), **Christy** (673-9764), or another follower of Jesus soon! Or call our **deacons & wives:** Tom & Martha Waddail, Steve & Debbie Bass, Freddy & Joyce Howard, Jere & Darlene Burnette, Alan & Christy Androski, Willy & Melissa Gamalero.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Based on the historical background of palm branches & Jewish revolt, do you think that the Jewish people expected Jesus to be their Prince of Peace or Militant Messiah? Explain your answer.
2. **Read John 11:49-54 & Isaiah 53:6.** Do you think Caiaphas intended to fulfill Scripture in plotting to kill Jesus? Explain your answer. How does it encourage you to know that God's plan won't be thwarted by His enemies? What is the ultimate outcome of Jesus death for the Jewish nation and the scattered children of God?
3. **Read John 12:1-7.** What do the actions and intentions of Mary and Judas say about their love for Jesus? How could it be that a person could see and hear all that Judas experienced and still betray Jesus?
4. **What is CHARACTER?** Tell of a time that you made the right decision & made the wrong decision when nobody (but God) was looking. If we really believed God saw everything, what difference would that make in our decisions? With that in mind, what does OUR public or private DISOBEDIENCE communicate?
5. **Read John 12:14-16 & Zechariah 9:9.** How could it be that the Jewish people didn't see the fulfillment of prophecy in the triumphant entry into Jerusalem? How did their expectations of a militant Messiah blind them to what Jesus had come to do?
6. **Read John 12:23-24.** Tell some stories about "much fruit" - peoples' lives who have been changed by the death and resurrection of Jesus.
7. Share about someone you need to share your testimony with. Are you excited, scared, or nervous? Explain your answer. Then have others pray for you to take the opportunity to share with him/her.