

An Exposition of the
GOSPEL OF JOHN



“The Tragic Entry”

John 12:12-19

Theme: Unless we receive Jesus as Savior from sin, our praise brings Him sorrow rather than joy.

Introduction: What makes you cry? Maybe a sharp, sudden pain; perhaps a sentimental movie; certainly the grief caused by death or the empty chair of someone you’ll not see again.

Now picture Jesus approaching Jerusalem. Around Him, people are celebrating. Palm branches wave. Voices shout, “Hosanna!” They welcome Him as the King of Israel. From the roadside, everything looks triumphant.

But as Jesus draws near and sees the city, He weeps.

He knows the need beneath their excitement. He has come to save, but they do not recognize the way of peace. Their praise fills the air while the cross toward which He is traveling remains beyond their understanding.

John tells us that even His disciples did not yet understand. Luke records that, as Jesus approached Jerusalem, He wept over the city. Amid the celebration, the King saw people who had failed to recognize the way of peace.

And that brings this passage uncomfortably close to us.

We know how to sing about Jesus. We know how to speak warmly of Him, ask for His help, and celebrate His power. But what do we want Him to save us from? Disappointment? Financial pressure? The consequences of someone else’s wrongdoing?

Have we come to Him for forgiveness? Do we want freedom from the pride, bitterness, lust, and unbelief within our own hearts? Will we receive the Savior who exposes our sin and calls us to repentance?

Unless we receive Jesus as Savior from sin, our praise brings Him sorrow rather than joy.

Today we will consider this familiar procession as **the Tragic Entry**. We will see **the tragedy of misguided anthems**, **the tragedy of Messianic anguish**, and **the tragedy of misled affections**.

As we listen, we must ask: When I praise Jesus, am I welcoming the Savior He came to be?

I. The Tragedy of Misguided Anthems – *12:12-13*

A. The Purpose of the Procession into Jerusalem

1. The time has come for Jesus to accomplish His mission of redemption.
2. Ever since He began His public ministry, He had indicated that His “hour had not yet come”, cf. *John 2:4*.

3. However, that time had now come as the Passover celebration was within the week.
4. *“On the next day ...”* - The timing of this was specific according to the prophecies throughout the Old Testament, specifically in [Daniel 9:24-26](#):
 - a) *The “decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem” was by Artaxerxes in 444 BC when he ordered the rebuilding of the Temple.*
 - b) *“After sixty-two weeks” – that is, 69 weeks or 483 Jewish years – the “Messiah the Prince” would come – meaning that at the “official presentation” of the King would occur in 33 AD – a year that exactly lines up with the account provided here with a Passover on a Friday and followed by a Sabbath.*
 - c) *After the presentation, “the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing ...” – a reference to the crucifixion.*
5. The requirement in the Law for the selection of the Passover lamb is that it is to be selected on the 10th day of the first month, “Nisan,” and then sacrificed on the 14th day – *Exodus 12:2-6*.
6. This means that the presentation and “selection” of Jesus – who is our “Passover Lamb” – had to be on Monday – March 30th, 33 A.D. (Nisan 10th) and crucified on Passover – Friday, April 3rd, 33 AD (Nisan 14th) – exactly the alignment of the dates needed by Daniel’s prophecy.
7. Jesus had repeatedly admonished His followers to “hold their peace” about His identity, even forbidding them from testifying about Him – cp. [Matthew 16:20](#); [Mark 5:43](#); [Mark 9:9](#); [John 7:4-6](#).
8. However, we now see that Jesus deliberately plans a demonstration, fully aware that, as a result, the masses’ enthusiasm will enrage the hostile leaders in Jerusalem to such a degree that they will become irrevocably committed to His death.
9. Thus, what is commonly called the “Triumphal Entry” clearly indicates that Jesus was voluntarily laying down His life, even going so far as to “**guarantee**” the resolve of His enemies to carry out God’s predetermined plan, cp. [Acts 2:23](#).
10. *“On the next day, the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took the branches of the palm trees ...”* - John seems to jump into the story right in the middle. Let’s look at the events in the order the Synoptics present them.¹
 - a) *Jesus leaves Bethany and sends two disciples to bring the animal He plans to ride into Jerusalem – cf. Matthew 21:1-3, 6, 7; Mark 11:1-6; Luke 19:29-34.*

¹ Hendricksen, pp. 184-188.

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- b) *The disciples spread their outer garments on the animals, and Jesus chooses the donkey to fulfill [Zechariah 9:9](#) – see Matthew 21:4-5; Mark 11:7; Luke 19:35; John 12:14-15.*
- c) *The people who accompany Jesus from Bethany spread their garments in the way, while others cut branches from trees to pave His way – cp. Matthew 21:8; Mark 11:8; Luke 19:36.*
- d) *A multitude of pilgrims who were seeking Jesus hear that He is coming and begin to pour out of the eastern gate to meet Him, cutting palm branches from trees along the way and beginning a march to meet Him – cp. John 12:1, 12, 13a, 18.*
- e) *When the two crowds (one from Bethany and the other from Jerusalem) converge, enthusiasm mounts. They gather around Jesus – some in front of Him, others behind – and as they descend the slope of the Mount of Olives, they begin to shout:*
 - (1) Hosanna!
 - (2) Blessed is he (who is) coming in the name of the Lord, Even the king of Israel!
 - (3) Blessed is the kingdom that is coming, the kingdom of our father David.
 - (4) Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest!

Matthew 21:9; Mark 11:9-10; Luke 19:37-38; John 12:13b
- f) *The part of the crowd that has come from Bethany attests that Jesus indeed has raised Lazarus, and the excitement reaches a climax – cp. [John 12:17](#).*
- g) *The Pharisees call on Jesus to rebuke His disciples, and He tells them that if He did, even the very rocks would cry out – cp. [Luke 19:39-40](#).*
- h) *As the city comes into plain view, Jesus, fully aware that much of the praise he receives is based on an expectation of a mere political priority, breaks into loud weeping, in part because of the vision of the city as it will be under the Romans' wrath – cp. [Luke 19:41-44](#).*
- i) *As Jesus enters Jerusalem, additional people show curiosity about who He is – cp. Matthew 21:10-11.*
- j) *When Jesus arrives at the Temple, he heals the blind and the lame – Matthew 21:14; Mark 11:11a.*
- k) *The children in the temple begin to praise Him – an event that infuriates the Pharisees, who call on Jesus to silence them. Jesus responds that this fulfills God's Word – cp. Matthew 21:15-16.*
- l) *The frustrated Pharisees appeal to those among their number who had advised restraint and patience, urging them to notice that this tactic is only making matters worse – cp. [John 12:19](#).*
- m) *When evening falls, Jesus and the 12 return to Bethany for the night – cp. Matthew 21:17; Mark 11:11b.*

- n) *The disciples are unaware of the significance of the day's events – that they fulfilled the messianic prophecies – cp. **John 12:16**.*
- (1) Genesis 49:9-11 – the scepter of Judah.
 - (2) Daniel 9:24-27 – the cutting off of the Prince.
 - (3) Zechariah 9:9 – riding the donkey.

B. The Priorities of the People of Jerusalem – vv. 12-13

1. The crowd believes that Jesus of Nazareth – the man so powerful that He can raise a person from the dead – is the great hope for Israel's deliverance from the power and oppression of Rome.
2. However, as we will see, their expectations did not align with his revealed message; their theological illiteracy and political aspirations created a disconnect.
3. As a result, ***“when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him.”***
 - a) *The palm branches were associated with victory, triumph, and strength – in part because of their permanent beauty and the crown of leaves at the top of the tree.*
 - b) *The palm branches carried associations of victory and national deliverance, based on the historical celebration after Israel defeated its enemies and Simon entered Jerusalem.*
 - c) ***1 Maccabees 13:51** says: “And entered into it the three and twentieth day of the second month in the hundred seventy and first year, with thanksgiving, and **branches of palm trees**, and with harps, and cymbals, and with viols, and hymns, and songs: because there was destroyed a great enemy out of Israel.”*
 - d) *This provides a context where there was expectation that Jesus would likewise rid Israel of the oppression of the Jews' enemies - Rome.*
4. However, their shouts also reflected their hope – they ***“began to shout, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord, even the King of Israel’.”***
5. They are absolutely convinced that the celebration of God's delivering them out of their bondage in Egypt (Passover) is the perfect occasion for God to provide them a deliverer from their bondage to the Romans
6. The cry of ***“hosanna!”*** literally means: “save, now” and serves as a petition to Jehovah by the worshipper who is convinced that the proper time for full deliverance has now at last arrived.
7. Their use of ***Psalm 118:25-26*** shows that they believe Jesus was given by God to provide them with deliverance – only they were misguided about the focus of His deliverance: ***God desired to deliver them from sin,***

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while they wanted political deliverance.

II. The Tragedy of Messianic Anguish – 12:14-16

A. The Prophetic Presentation of the Messiah – vv. 14-15

1. As the people focused on their own agenda and their hope that Jesus would be the mighty conqueror the Messiah was “supposed” to be, Jesus presented Himself in humility.
2. We are told that *“Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it ...”* – indicating humility and meekness instead of might and strength
3. This conveyed the peaceful nature of the Kingdom – not that He would be a great military leader (which would have been conveyed if He had ridden a horse).
4. This is exactly the context of the prophecy quoted – *“... as it is written, ‘Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt’.*” – cp. [Zechariah 9:9](#).

B. The Personal Pain of the Messiah – v. 16

1. The significance of His actions was missed by all that day: *“These things His disciples did not understand at the first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him.”*
2. As a consequence, Jesus presents Himself for a spiritual purpose that no one embraces – they could not get past Rome.
3. As a result, Jesus’s heart breaks over their praise, joy, and applause, knowing that it is actually a tacit rejection – cp. [Luke 19:41-42](#)
4. This same sorrow is evident at other times during this final week of Christ’s ministry, cf. [Matthew 23:37-39](#).
5. The disciples didn’t understand the day’s impact on Christ – until after He was glorified – *“and that they had done these things to Him.”*

III. The Tragedy of Misled Affections – 12:17-19

A. The Aspirations of the People – vv. 17-18

1. A major priority that the Jewish people possessed was the ability to be free from Rome – they were tenaciously preoccupied with His power – *“So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify about Him.”*

2. They essentially incited their fellow countrymen into like enthusiasm for hope of freedom through Christ – *“For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign.”*
3. Yet they kept missing the point: The miracle reveals more than power useful for accomplishing earthly ambitions and political causes; it calls people to trust Him for life beyond death - *John 11:25–26.*
4. Misled affection says, “Jesus, accomplish my purposes.” Faith learns to say, “Jesus, teach me to embrace Yours.”
5. The zealots among the people would have been particularly busy attempting to gain the people’s allegiance to the “King of Israel.”

B. The Antipathy of the Pharisees – v. 19

1. The council had already acknowledged Jesus’s signs, yet responded by plotting His death. Their opposition illustrates how perceived threats to security can govern the interpretation of evidence.
2. Obviously, the Pharisees had already decided to kill Jesus to avoid the wrath of Rome – cp. *John 11:50.*
3. Apparently, some of the Pharisees had counseled patience in determining the best time to attempt this.
4. Some felt it would be unwise to attempt anything while so many people were in Jerusalem – cp. *Mark 14:2.*
5. However, given the current atmosphere and the adulation being directed toward Jesus, the more militant among them began to pressure the moderates into action – *“So the Pharisees said to one another, ‘You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him.’”*
6. This was exactly how Christ knew they would react, hastening their willingness to take Him and guaranteeing His death on Passover!

So What?

1. **Jesus entered Jerusalem knowing what obedience would cost Him. What steps can I take to avoid measuring God’s will primarily by how comfortable it makes my life?**
2. **What act of obedience have I postponed because it might bring rejection, inconvenience, or loss?**
3. **Where have my political hopes, personal ambitions, or desire for security begun to shape what I expect Jesus to do?**
4. **Where do I need to relinquish control and welcome what Christ is**

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doing?

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THEME

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- I. | The Tragedy of Misguided Anthems
vv. 12–13
- II. | The Tragedy of Messianic Anguish
vv. 14–16
- III. | The Tragedy of Mised Affections
vv. 17–19