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Series: The Gospel of John
Message: Your King is Coming

Transcribed Message
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John 12:9-26

It was just a couple of weeks ago that we had a king and queen visit our country. Remember that King Charles and Queen Camilla came and visited us from England? We were celebrating 250 years of independence from them, which was rather interesting, right? Come over to our country and we will recognize you and we will be thankful that we are no longer your servants, I guess is the way you could see that. But everywhere they went, there was a lot of pomp and circumstance. That's what happens when you're a king, right? Not only was there a literal red carpet rolled out everywhere they went, there was a figurative pomp and circumstance and red carpet that was rolled out as well.

Well, we come, as we just read in John 12 this morning, to a king and he is coming into his city and it's a very familiar story, of course. Jesus, in this one of his last public ministry events, presents himself as king. So, let's look together at these verses. Here's what we want to see. In what we traditionally think of as the triumphal entry and Palm Sunday, we want to see that our responsibility and our privilege, really, is to lift up Jesus, to lift up his name, even as we have done this morning. We do it in worship. We do it in witness. We do it, of course, in our words so that he can, in fact, draw all to himself.

So, a quick review of the context. This takes us back to what we've been doing so far in the twelfth chapter. This event that we look at this morning that's so familiar to us is the beginning of the last week in the life of our Lord. So, if Mary anointing Jesus happened on Saturday, then now we're at Sunday, in this Sunday of the triumphal entry, the Sunday of Palm Sunday. Tomorrow, on Monday, Jesus will be cleaning out the temple for the second time. He'll be cursing the fig tree. Tuesday, the disciples will walk by the fig tree and be amazed that it is no longer producing leaves and fruit. Wednesdays, there's preparation for the last Passover. Thursday is Maundy Thursday, and then suddenly we're into Friday and the rest of that week. So, this is the beginning of the last week in the life of our Lord.

Secondly, this event is in all four of the Gospels. It's interesting that we have noted that there are not that many instances that are recorded in all four Gospels. That's why we have the synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, because there's a lot of similarity in those Gospels. And then we have the Gospel of John, and John always gives us a different perspective of things that he's writing about. What you have is John giving us his vantage point. He doesn't give us the details that Matthew, Mark, and Luke do, but he does record for us the responses of the reactions of the crowds and of people to what is happening on this day. So, that will be of interest to us.

And then the last thing we want to see by way of introduction is this event just marks the complete reversal of everything else that we've seen in Jesus' ministry to this point. We're going to dive into that in much more detail, but you just tuck that away and think about the fact that what this event signifies is going to be something that's totally different to this point in Jesus' life and ministry, and so we'll see what that looks like.

So, let's look at the triumphal entry. Some people refer to it as the untriumphal entry, and it could even be, I suppose, the tragic entry as well. The setting is given to us in those three verses, 9, 10, and 11. Let's look at those again. When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came not only on account of Him, but also to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. So, the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of Him, many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

So, we ask a few questions here. We start off with the setting and noting, first of all, where is this happening? Well, we're right where we were last time. We're still in Bethany. We're in Bethany, but we're going to be moving as this story unfolds. We're going to be moving to Jerusalem. John is going to tell us a couple of different times that there was a large gathering, a large crowd. You see it at the beginning of verse 9, and he's going to say it again in verse 12. Word has spread quickly that Jesus is back in the area. He's not yet in Jerusalem. Remember, He left at the end of the 11th chapter under the threat of death, but now He's back, and He's just close by, two miles away. He's in Bethany. Word spreads,

and a whole bunch of people, remember we noted that last time, came to Bethany to see Him.

So, the second thing we ask is, well, when is all of this happening? Well, it of course is, again, in two parts, right? Lazarus has been raised from the dead. Mary has anointed Jesus, and the Passover is unfolding on this time frame in Jerusalem. A man by the name of Josephus, a Jewish historian, who has written and given us a lot of insight into the very time of our Lord of the first century. He sometimes tends to exaggerate his numbers, but he says that there's a couple of million people that would make their way to Jerusalem for the Passover. Remember, every adult male was required to come to Passover, and they would literally come from all over. They would come from all over the Middle East, but they would come as they could from any part of the world that they could make it at some point to Jerusalem. So, Jerusalem is just packed with people. Even if it isn't two million, even if it's half of that, even if there are a million people in Jerusalem at this time, even if it's a fourth of that, even if it's 500,000, Jerusalem, the old city of Jerusalem at this point is not that big of a city. So, all of this is happening, and this crowd is jammed into Jerusalem proper.

And why? Well, John tells us at the end of verse 9, this large crowd, not only there for Passover in Jerusalem, but this large crowd has gathered in Bethany. Look what he says, not only on account of Him. Who's Him? Jesus. They're not only coming to Bethany on account of Him, that is to see Jesus, but, John says, also to see Lazarus. That's got to kind of be a little bit embarrassing for Lazarus. They're coming not just to see Jesus, but they're also coming to see Lazarus. And so, he tells us that they're coming not only to see Jesus, but Lazarus. It reminds me of the fact that we, by human nature, like to see the unusual, don't we?

I can remember, almost like it was yesterday, I was in grade school. The tallest man in the world, is the way it was advertised. The tallest man in the world came to Omaha, and he was at the local Safeway grocery store just a few miles from our home. And I went with my folks to the grocery store that day, and there's this giant of a man, and I think it was like he was nearly eight feet tall. Victor Wemben-Yambo would look up to this guy, right? Our own Chet would look up to this guy. He was almost eight feet tall. They were giving away

black and white glossy pictures of him that he would sign, and the guy could literally look all over the store if you said, where's the tomato sauce? He'd just say right over, you know, I mean, he was big. What is that? People just want to see something unusual. This is unusual, isn't it? Here is Lazarus. Lazarus died. Lazarus was in the tomb for four days. Lazarus responded to the shout of our Lord, came out of that tomb, and he's walking around, and people want to see him. This is unusual.

But look at verse 10. Poor Lazarus, right? Verse 10. So, the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well. I mean, the guy has already died once, and he's been raised back. Everybody knows his story. He's back alive. That simply cannot be refuted. And because they cannot refute it, the religious leaders design now to kill not only Jesus, but now they want to kill Lazarus. You see, up to this point, they could bait and switch. They could deny the various miracles of our Lord. I mean, if you were with us back in chapter 9, remember how hard they worked to prove that a man who had been born blind was now seeing, and calling into question even his parents as to whether the guy was ever blind. We know that when Jesus turned water to wine, there had to be skeptics that were saying something like, well, they just had extra wine somewhere, and they remembered it at the right time. You know, all those things were possible to deny, but not this one. This one they could not explain away. This is a man who was dead, and now he's walking among them.

Now, the second thing you see about this is it's embarrassing. It's embarrassing Lazarus. Now, it's not that Lazarus is embarrassed, but who is Lazarus embarrassing? He's embarrassing the religious leaders. The majority of the Sanhedrin, the majority of the religious leaders of this time were Sadducees, and the Sadducees denied the miracle of resurrection. They denied a whole bunch of the Old Testament, but they specifically denied the doctrine of resurrection. And yet, here's this man, Lazarus. He's a walking apologetic. He's a walking denial of one of the tenets that they were putting forth, this idea that there is no resurrection. And every day that people looked at Lazarus, and every day that Lazarus walked among these people, he was testifying to the fact that Jesus is more than a man. Jesus is, in fact, a death conqueror. Jesus is the one who shouted at me, and I came out of

that tomb after I'd been in there for four days. They just can't deal with this. And so, poor Lazarus, because they want to kill him, and embarrassing Lazarus because he is a testimony against them. He's embarrassing. He's the cause of embarrassment, right? The rebuttal of everything that they believe is now viewed daily in Lazarus.

Two things, it seems to me, that flow out of that. The first one is simply looking at verse 11 again, because on account of him, that is Lazarus, many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus. Now, what does that mean? Many of the Jews were going away. Going away where? Going away is not a reference to physically going away. They were going away from Judaism. They were going away from the standard that was being put forward by the religious leaders of that time, and they were no longer following them. They were going away, and they were believing that Jesus is, in fact, the death conqueror. That Jesus is, as he said, the Son of Man. And not only the Son of Man, but the Son of God, which is exactly what that means, right? So, they're going away from the traditions of the Sadducees and the Pharisees and the religious leaders, and they're following Christ.

This is the very thing that they were concerned about back in chapter 9. Remember back in chapter 9, they threatened the parents of the blind man with what? We're going to put you out of the synagogue. And they did throw the guy that was healed of his blindness, they did throw him out. He didn't care. And that's exactly what they were concerned about, and here we are a couple chapters later, and it's happening. People are going away. Their very existence, in that sense, as religious leaders, is being threatened.

Now, here's the other thing. Religion is often the barrier to God. That's exactly what's unfolding here. Religion is often the barrier to God. If religion is all that you need, then you don't need Jesus. If religion provides you a way to heaven, then you don't need Jesus. But what the religious leaders of this day, and sadly even yet today, they basically want control, don't they? They want to control people. They want to tell people how to live their life. They want to tell people what they should and shouldn't do. And of course, we know that Jesus has come to give us freedom. Jesus has come to set us free. We are to follow what He has taught us, not simply what religious leaders tell us we should be doing. So, all that puts before us the setting.

Now, look at the event itself in verses 12 through 19. We have Jesus and Bethany. We have Lazarus raised from the dead. We have Mary anointing our Lord, and all of the implications of what that meant. This large crowd has gathered, and the stage is now set for this climactic event of the triumphal entry. And it begins with the affirmation of the crowd in verses 12 and 13. Notice, the next day, the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 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.

It's good to note right here, the fickleness of the human heart. I'm sure that some of the people who attend this event that's being described here are also going to be in attendance come Friday. I don't think it's the same group, because I think there would have been other people who would have come for Passover that wouldn't have been here necessarily on this Sunday. But it does speak to the fickleness of the human heart, and it begins with what I said in the introduction. It begins with a major change, because to this point in Jesus's ministry, what did Jesus do? He kept His identity under wraps. Mark makes this so clear in his gospel, and I know that you've heard this, and you're familiar with this, and oftentimes we get asked about this.

And you go back to Mark's gospel in the first chapter and verse 44, and what do we read? Jesus said to him, he's just healed the leper, and what does Jesus say to him? See that you say nothing to anyone but go show yourself to the priest and offer your cleansing of what Moses commanded for proof of them. And then you go over to chapter 5, just a couple pages, and you look at verse 43, and there again, after a healing of the little girl who had died herself, what does Jesus say? And He strictly charged them that no one should know this and told them to give her something to eat. So don't tell anybody what happened in this room. I know I've just healed you of leprosy. Don't go tell anybody. Just go tell the priest and go on with your life. I know I just raised your daughter from the dead. Don't tell anybody about it. Don't offer any explanations for what happened in this room. And then the last one in chapter 7 and verse 36, we have a very similar statement. Jesus charged them to tell no one, but the more He charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed.

Why in the world, if Jesus is who He says He is, that He is the Son of God, that He is the Messiah, that He's come to this earth to provide salvation, why in the world, when we look at the ministry of the life of our Lord to this point, why do we read time and again that He tells people not to say anything to anybody? Don't tell people what happened. Don't tell people who you think I am. In our day and age, in our time, in the way we think, this is the time to crank up the public relations team, right? This is the time to get the Word out. Jesus, you need help in the public relations area because we can put together an incredible video of the miracles you're doing, and we can get an advanced team anytime you go anywhere, and we can guarantee that you're going to have massive crowds wherever you go. We get emails here at the church all the time from different groups and different speakers and different people, and they want to offer to come, and they'll tell you what they need, and it's obviously a necessary thing on some level, but public relations is just kind of a part of the deal, isn't it? But not with our Lord. This response, don't tell anybody, just seems so interesting.

Why is that? Here's why. Jesus knew that their idea about the coming of the Messiah was completely different than His idea. What they were looking for—this is what's going to play out in the rest of this story—what they were looking for was a political deliverer. What they were looking for was somebody to give them freedom from the oppression of Rome. What they enjoyed, we see this in the story, don't we? What they enjoyed was Jesus providing a free meal every now and then, and so their idea of a Messiah and His understanding of why He came was totally different. He is coming to present Himself as the suffering servant of Isaiah, and they want Him to come and be the deliverer from Rome.

This Old Testament prophecy, look at verse 13, said, "...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." Now, that quote that John gives to us here is taken from Psalm 118 and verses 25 and 26. In the Psalms, Psalm 113 to Psalm 118 is a collection of psalms called the Hallel Psalms, and the Hallel Psalms would have been sung—get this—they would have been sung by the worshiping community at Passover. So here is John drawing from the Old Testament the Hallel Psalm, Psalm 118. They all know

this psalm. They are familiar, but they're going to sing it in just a few days, and it reminds them about the coming One, the Messiah, and that's what John is quoting for us here.

The first word of verse 13, look at the first word of verse 13. The first word of verse 13 is “so”. I want to know, why in the world does the Holy Spirit have John use the word “so” for the first word of verse 13? The next day, verse 12, the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So, He is telling us the city of Jerusalem is abuzz with excitement. He is telling us that there is a fever pitch that's happening in Jerusalem with these hundreds of thousands of people as word begins to spread that this man named Jesus is coming, and He is near, and He is ready to enter. There's all this anticipation. That's why we have the word “so”.

When we think of Palm Sunday, what's the first thing we think of? Palms, right? The first thing we think of on Palm Sunday, well, it might be the triumphal entry, of course, but we think of palms. Now, what in the world is the significance of palms on Palm Sunday? We might think of it as something that was readily available, and it was some expression of celebration. No, it's vested with significant meaning.

In 167 A.D., Judas Maccabeus, you've heard that name, of course, the Maccabean Revolt. Judas Maccabeus began a guerrilla campaign against the Seleucids, against the Syrians in 167, and he didn't finish it off, but his brother Simon did. And his brother Simon, years later, was able to defeat Antiochus Epiphanes. Antiochus Epiphanes was a very evil man. Antiochus Epiphanes had profaned and blasphemed the very temple of God in Jerusalem. It was an incredible celebration when Antiochus was defeated by Judas and Simon in the Maccabean Rebellion. And when that happened, and when Simon and his men entered Jerusalem in triumph, people took palm branches, and they waved them in celebration of the deliverance of the people of God from Antiochus Epiphanes and the Syrians. So, palm branches, for us, it symbolizes immediately Jesus coming into Jerusalem, and it symbolizes the triumphal entry, and all that is true. But for them, it symbolized triumph in a political, military manner. And it was for this reason that they grabbed these palm branches in triumph. And what did they shout? Hosanna! What does Hosanna mean? Save us now. That's what it means. Save us now. They are, in their mind,

thinking that another Judas and Simon Maccabeus may very well be here. Save us from Roman oppression.

It is also during this time frame that Matthew and Luke remind us that Jesus, as He came towards the city, offered His lament. And remember that lament that's so sad of Jesus looking at Jerusalem and saying, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, oh, how I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks, but you would not. And that's what Luke and Matthew tell us as well.

Now, here is where it gets really interesting. Are you ready? Are you ready for something really interesting? Look at this. The response of Jesus to this setting. Jerusalem is abuzz. Excitement is fever pitch. They are ready to exalt and lift up and celebrate who Jesus is. And we come to verses 14 and 15, and Jesus found a young donkey, John says. The rest of the synoptic Gospels tell us that Jesus arranged all of this. He had disciples go in and they arranged it. Jesus found a young donkey and He sat on it, just as it is written, fear not, daughter of Zion, behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt.

Now, what is going on at this point? Well, Jesus is making two things very clear. The first thing He's making clear is He is going to be a different kind of king. How do you know He's going to be a different kind of king? You know He's going to be a different kind of king because verse 14 says He came into Jerusalem riding on a donkey. A donkey. Now, it's not even a donkey in terms of being a full-grown donkey. It's a foal of a donkey. It's a young donkey. So much so that as Jesus sits on this young animal, He probably has to either bend His feet back or have them sticking out just so that He is not hitting the ground. This is a small animal. Jesus is entering Jerusalem on a donkey.

Remember in the movie, those moms will remember this, in the movie Shrek, when, I don't remember exactly the interchange, but somebody in the storyline says to the donkey, you are a noble steed. Remember, he says something about the fact that a mighty warrior needs a noble steed, and the donkey is all puffed up in his chest. You hear that? You hear that? I am a noble steed. No, you're not. You're a donkey. And Jesus deliberately picks a donkey, not a white charger. He'll be on a white charger, John says in Revelation 19 and 20, when He comes back the second time, right? But this time, He makes His

triumphal entry. The crowd is shouting, Hosanna! Save us now! Here's our king! And Jesus is riding on a small donkey. He's saying to them as loudly as He could possibly say, I'm your king, but I'm a different kind of king than you're ready for.

And the second thing He's saying is, I'm going to establish a different kind of kingdom than you're ready for. Not a kingdom of brute force, not a kingdom of military might, not a kingdom that's going to come and overthrow Rome, but a kingdom of humble servants. Because as we know, Jesus said, I have not come to be served, but I have come to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many.

John's commentary in verse 16, look at that. 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. I hope that that encourages us. I hope that encourages us, because this is a picture of discipleship. It just simply tells us that these men who were with Jesus every day and observed him every day and heard him every day and were with him all the time had trouble putting together this unusual king coming with this unusual kingdom. They're not any different than us.

There are things that we don't always understand when we read our scripture. And those of you that have walked with God for a length of time, you know that there are things that as you read your Bible, even today, that you're going, oh, wow, I don't know if I saw that before, or at least in that way. And so here is, I think, an encouragement to us that we learn, we progress, we grow in our walk with God.

Now, John kind of puts in a little parenthesis here, and in verses 17 through 19, he goes back to the memory of raising Lazarus. And he tells us two things, how it happened and the impact of that. Verse 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. The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. So, the Pharisees said to one another, you see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.

They are, first of all, in verse 17, just reminding themselves about what happened and how Lazarus responded to this shout from Jesus. He came out, right? They had heard

about this. Some of them had been there, and that Jesus has raised them from the dead. The impact that that event has had is underscored then in verses 18 and 19. They continued to bear witness. This is the first time in the Gospel of John that we have a reference like this, that people are bearing witness about who Christ is. They are the first evangelists, if you will, that are just testifying to what they have seen and heard, the very thing that we're called to do, right?

Look at the desperation of the Pharisees. The desperation of the Pharisees is such that they are losing, obviously, what they believe is their control. People are believing, and it's almost like there's a foreshadowing when they say, at the end of verse 19, look, the world has gone after him. It takes me not only to Psalm 2 that Jonathan read, but to Philippians 2. Every knee is going to bow, every tongue is going to confess. At this point, of course, this is hyperbole. The whole world hasn't gone after him yet, but in their world and in their mind, as they see all these people going away and following after and believing in Jesus, it certainly felt that way.

Then, what do we have? We have another sudden change in the sequence. When we look at verses 20 to 26, this just doesn't seem to fit. We're in this flow of Jesus being in Bethany, the raising of Lazarus, the anointing by Mary, the triumphal entry that happens on that Sunday morning, and then all of a sudden, this disjunctive thought seems to enter into John's mind as he's writing this, and he talks about the Greeks. Look at this, in verses 20 through 26. Let's read first verses 20 to 22 and just see the request that comes. Now, among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, sir, we wish to see Jesus. Philip went and told Andrew. Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

The list of questions that come after you just read those verses are what? What in the world does this have to do with the triumphal entry that's unfolding right in front of us? Who, in fact, are these Greeks? Where are they from? What are they here for? What do they want? All these questions beg for an answer, don't they? It just seems out of sequence to what we might expect. Well, the reference here to the Greeks is just a reference to Gentiles. As the Jewish people viewed the world, they viewed the world very simply as

we're Jewish, you're not. We're Jewish, you're Greeks. We would just simply say we're Gentiles, most of us. And so that's what is happening here. They're in Jerusalem because they're God-fearing Gentiles. They're in Jerusalem because they want to be a part of the worship of God. And so they are here for the same reason that the Jews are. Even though they can't go into the temple area, they can stay in the outer court, right? The outer court of the Gentiles. And so that's why they're here.

I think John puts this here, first of all, to show us this incredible contrast to verse 19. Verse 19 is the religious leaders. They want to kill Lazarus. They want to kill Jesus. They're upset that the whole world is going after him. And then suddenly, he shifts over and it's like, yeah, well, here's some Gentiles and they're wanting to talk to Jesus, aren't they? Again, it's almost a foreshadowing of the nations of the world, Isaiah says, that will come and worship him. I love that contrast though.

I love that statement. Sir, we wish to see Jesus. What a great line, right? We wish to see Jesus. What does that mean? They don't want to just see him, do they? They don't want to just physically see him. They didn't go to the Safeway store just to see the tallest man in the world. No, they want to talk to him. They want an appointment with Jesus. They want to have an opportunity to interact with him. That's what they're asking for here. And interestingly, they asked Philip. And Philip is probably the go-to guy because he has a Greek name. And they maybe think that's their best way in to see Jesus.

And then what does Philip do? Philip goes to Andrew. Now, why does Philip go to Andrew? Well, Andrew's also a Greek name. And it might be that in Philip's mind, instead of saying, well sure, come on, let me go take you. Here's Jesus. Do you think it's possible that Philip is thinking about the fact that earlier in a time of teaching, Jesus said, don't go to the Gentiles. You go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And maybe Philip's like, man, I'm not going to bring these Gentiles to Jesus when he just told us previously, don't go to the Gentiles, go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. So that's very possibly why we read what we read.

Now, look at the answer. The answer is rather amazing. It's a non-answer. And Jesus answered them, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. What if you did not

know, verse 23 was there. What would you write most likely as to what happens next? Well, Jesus says to Philip and Andrew, well, you know, guys, we're kind of pressed for time. I'm in the middle of a triumphal entry here. Let's set up an appointment for tomorrow. He didn't say that. He doesn't say, of course, bring them. You know, I always welcome people. I always want to talk. He didn't say that either. He actually never says a word about the Greeks. John never says another word. They're never mentioned. We're never told if they got to see Jesus or not. That amazing statement, sir, we would wish to see Jesus. We're just left hanging. We'll have to find these people someday and say, did you ever get a chance to meet him?

But what Jesus does instead, he talks about the time. Rather odd thing, isn't it? He talks about the time. Jesus answered them, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. The hour has come. The very thing that we had heard previously numerous times was what? The hour is not yet. Jesus said that to Mary in John 2 when his own mom came and said, Jesus, we got a problem here. Could you please help and take care of it? What does Jesus say? Woman, what is this to do with me? My hour has not yet come. And now here we are in chapter 12 and Jesus says, yeah, it's now. It's no longer, it hasn't come, but now it's here. It's not in the future. It's right now.

Folks, understand when Jesus says the hour has come, he is pointing to and he's introducing us to the most climactic week in human history. He's pointing us to the greatest redemptive week in the history of humanity. This is it. This is the climax for all the reasons that he has come. He is pointing to this hour and saying, now is the time.

And notice what he says. The son of man. Remember, son of man has not got anything to do with his humanity. It has everything to do with his deity. When Jesus says the son of man will be glorified, if I ask you, what is in view when Jesus is glorified? What comes to mind when you think of the glorification of Jesus? You think probably either of the resurrection and most certainly you think of the ascension. And probably we would most likely go to the ascension. The ascension was when he was lifted up into glory.

Now look at this. Jesus doesn't make any distinction when he says the hour is now. This is the moment why the son of man has come to be glorified. He makes no distinction

between his suffering on the cross and the horror of all that he endured on the cross. He makes no distinction between that and his resurrection and his ascension and his glorification. It's all one to him. It's all one. It's one and the same.

Now look at this last thing, this paradox in verses 24 through 26. 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. Whoever loses 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 be my servant also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

Jesus, in those verses, is explaining what he had just said previously. He's basically saying to us three things in this paradox. You have to die to bear fruit, you have to hate your life, and you have to serve to be honored. My friends, that is the essence of the Christian life. That is the essence of God's call on you as a Christ follower, that you would die to bear fruit, that you would hate your life to keep it, and that you would serve to be honored.

You take a seed, you take any seed that you want, just take a seed, and you take that seed and you put it on a shelf, and that seed is worthless, nothing happens. You take that seed and you put it into the ground, and it, in a sense, dies, but it brings forth life. You hate your life, not in self-loathing. Jesus isn't calling on you to look in the mirror every morning and say, I hate myself. Of course not. He's saying, compared to your love for me, your love for everything other than me pales in significance, and it's like hating. You want to be honored, you find what it means to be a servant. We're right back where we started. Our responsibility, our privilege, is, in fact, to lift up the name of Jesus and to do it in worship, to do it in witness, to do it in words, so that we can put forward to the world the one who they would want to know and see.

So, what do we take away? I say to you this morning, my friends, the hardest thing, you could say the hardest things, maybe bring the greatest joy, right? Dying daily to self. Daily to die to self, that's the hardest thing. To live for God's glory, that's the greatest thing. And right there it is before us, the paradox of the Christian life. The way up, Jesus says, is actually the way down. It's the exact opposite message that the world gives to us every day of our life.

The world says to you every day, put yourself first. Put yourself first in your marriage, put yourself first at work, put yourself first in your family, put yourself first among your friends, it doesn't matter. The message of the world is you are the most important. And what Jesus says is, in fact, that the hardest thing brings the greatest joy. To die to self every day is the hardest thing, but it brings the greatest joy.

And it all starts, of course, with the gospel, doesn't it? It all starts by recognizing that we have nothing to offer God of our own. It all starts with grace and what God has done for us, not what we can do for him. So, if you've not put your faith and trust in Christ alone this morning, that's the beginning of this journey. It's not what you can do for God. It's what he's done for you through the death and resurrection of his Son.

Let's pray. Gracious Father, we do lift up the name of Jesus. We exalt the name of our Lord and Savior. We are thankful for the words of John to us by your Spirit that remind us of the life of our Lord, of his faithfulness, of his trust in you, Father. He waited for the hour, and when that hour came, he moved towards that to provide this amazing salvation for us. We thank you for that blessing. We thank you for this gospel. Lord, work in each of our lives. Give us the boldness and the willingness to die to self every day. And Lord, call this morning to yourself those whom you would save, that they would put their trust in Jesus alone. We pray in Christ's name, amen.