

The Coming of the King

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[0 : 0 0] Well, keep your Bibles open there at John chapter 12. We're going to be working through John now up till Easter time and hopefully, God willing, by then we'll have covered the whole book, knocked it over.

Now you've got to either love Jesus or hate him. You're either for him or against him. There's no choice really. If you're for him, then you'll follow him no matter what the cost. That's what you'll do. If you're against Jesus, well, you'll oppose him. Even if you can't deny his power, you'll oppose him.

You may even sell out on him after being around him for a while. Ultimately, there's no middle ground when it comes to Jesus. Now in this passage of John, we see the hearts of various people being exposed.

We see the heart of Mary exposed. We see the heart of Judas exposed. We see the hearts of the crowd exposed. And I guess that we can probably also see our hearts exposed as God's Word speaks to us.

And so the particular question that this part of God's Word raises for us is this. Would you pour out your life in abandonment of all to follow Jesus?

[1 : 1 6] Or more pointedly, do we pour out our lives in abandonment to follow Jesus? Now, John's Gospel, we've been working for a couple of years now.

And since it's now been a while since we've been back, I thought we'd give a quick, bit of a quick overview of it. Two sections for John's Gospel, really. There's a first part and a second part. John can be broken into two halves.

The Book of Signs and the Book of Glory is how sort of people have broken up the John's Gospel. And we're picking up the Gospel of John at the end of the Book of Signs. That's what we're doing.

And so the signs cover John's Gospel from chapter 1 through to chapter 12, verse 29. We'll get to that next week. And then chapter 12, verse 29 through to the end of the Book is the Book of Glory.

That's the two halves. And so the first half, the first book, the Book of Signs, covers the period of Jesus' life from the time when John declared him to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[2 : 2 1] After he saw the Spirit descend upon him. Up until his last entry into Jerusalem. That's the Book of Signs. Which is the point where we're starting today.

Around about three years of Jesus' life, the first half of the book covers. The second half of the book covers the rest of his time on earth, leading up to the cross and his resurrection.

So about two weeks of his life. So the action slows down now. And there's a purpose and there's a prologue in John's Gospel.

The prologue in chapter 1, verses 1 to 14, sets out what we're going to see happen in the book. So I'll read out to you the prologue, chapter 1, verse 1 to 5.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God, and all things were made through him. And without him was not anything made that was made.

[3 : 20] In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. And then you come down to verse 14. The Word became flesh, that is, Jesus became flesh, and dwelt among us.

We have seen his glory, glory, as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. Now friends, if you're looking for someone who's gracious, who'll be kind to you, then look no further than Jesus.

He's gracious and kind. You want to know the truth that matters? Then you need to know Jesus, because he is the truth. He is God in the flesh, who lived amongst us, and we learn about him through his written Word, which we have in the Scriptures before us.

And at one level, that's why we say, thanks be to God, when we read the Scriptures. So, when a person reads out the Bible, they say, this is the Word of God, because it is. And then we respond, wow, thank you God for giving us your Word.

It is God's Word, thanks be to God. That's why we do what we do here. And so, the conclusion then, sets out the purpose for John's Gospel. I don't know if you like mystery books.

[4 : 41] I've read one just recently, and I didn't know what was going on until the last page. I didn't read the last couple of pages, because I didn't want to wreck the book. Sorry, I don't know what you're like. But John sets it out for us. Here we go, John chapter 20, verse 31.

These things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. I'll read that again, just the purpose of John's Gospel.

These things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

That's why it's written. So, if you're looking for life, and life to the full, I suspect most people in the world are, then the place to start is by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the place to start. To believe that Jesus is the Christ, that is, he's the anointed king from God, who rules the heavens and the earth, and everything in them.

[5 : 50] And if you believe in Jesus, you have life, and life to the full. Then you will be comforted. You'll have hope of a future which is certain.

Life now, and life forever, beyond the grave, for all eternity. That will transform the way that we live in this world.

Now, so far in John's Gospel, well, I'm not going to do that this morning. You can read it. We'll pick it up next week. We're going to, you know, we covered chapters 2 to chapter 11. But there's growing expectations.

We're at Passover time now. So come to John chapter 12. Stick with me there. John chapter 12. John chapter 12, verse 1. It's six days before the Passover.

That's what time it is. Now, Jesus has come from Bethany, where he's recently been staying in a town named Ephraim.

[6 : 55] Come back to chapter 11, verse 54. Pick up the story. Jesus, therefore, no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with his disciples.

Now, the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country into Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. They were looking for 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? Now, the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know so that they might arrest him.

Now, Jesus is in Bethany. It's about two kilometres or so from Jerusalem now. He's come up to Bethany. Bit of a map there for you.

It's a real part. There's the central, there's the sort of, there it is. There's Judea, and there's Jerusalem and Bethany. It's about two or three kilometres away. He'd been up in Ephraim, come to Bethany. That's where he is right now.

[8 : 03] And Jerusalem is just a couple of kilometres away. Thanks for that. So, the Passover is the reason they're coming up to Jerusalem. It's three times a year when every Jewish male was supposed to come up to Jerusalem, right?

Three times a year to worship in the temple. It's a time when three million people or so would be coming to Jerusalem. It's a time when the Jews remembered their salvation from the Egyptians.

That's what the Passover is. A time that happened about 1400 years beforehand, when God saved them, God rescued them, and God punished those who did not trust in the blood of the lamb that was shed and blood put over the door for them.

It was a time of deliverance and a time of judgment. Those who did not trust in the word, well, they did not put the blood over the door.

God's angel passed over them and destroyed the firstborn child in that house. But for those who did have the blood over the door, the angel passed it, the death passed over them, and they were saved, they were free.

[9 : 14] And now, verse 55, a crowd is heading up to Jerusalem, chapter 11, verse 55, and they're wondering if Jesus is going to be there too. And all we know though, it's going to be tough for Jesus to go to Jerusalem because he's a wanted man now.

He's a wanted man. And you've got to ask the question, why is Jesus a wanted man? Why would they want to arrest him? And the problem is Lazarus.

Lazarus is the problem. Lazarus has been raised from the dead. Jesus has brought a dead man back to life again.

Lazarus. Come back to chapter 11, verse 43, and you'll see it. Chapter 11, verse 43. When Jesus had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out.

The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, unbind him, let him go.

[10 : 24] Jesus has raised a dead man from the life, and it's not a secret. It's out there for the whole world to see. And now Jesus is in Bethany.

That's Lazarus' hometown. Chapter 12, verse 1. He's in Bethany. And, not quite sure, not quite sure where the dinner was held, right?

Lazarus is the one that he's raised from the dead so that God's glory might be displayed through him, and that the Son of God might be glorified through it. The raising of Lazarus is the last sign recorded in John's Gospel, other than the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Pretty big sign, I would have thought. And this dead man, who's been brought to life, demonstrates the great power of God to raise a dead, dead, dead person.

I don't know if you've ever had something dead in your hands and tried to bring it back to life again. I had a little guinea pig in my hand once, and it was dead. And no matter what I did, I could not bring that guinea pig back to life again.

[11 : 44] It was dead. But Jesus raised a man who was dead to life again.

It's because of Lazarus that many people are starting to side with Jesus. And that Jesus can raise the dead is very, very significant.

because if he can't, if Jesus can't raise the dead, well then our belief in him is futile.

It is pointless. Absolutely pointless. And so now let's consider Mary. We're at the dinner held in honour of Jesus.

Verse 2. So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at the table.

[12 : 44] And we're going to see an extraordinary act of devotion from Mary who is the brother of Lazarus. Mary recognises something about Jesus which moves her to extraordinary devotion you see there in verse 3.

Mary therefore took a pound 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. This is not the woman Mary of Luke chapter 7. This is Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus.

You can pick it up in chapter 11 verse 1. And she takes something of great worth pure nard and exotic expensive ointment extracted from the nard plant that comes from India.

That's where it comes from. It's a very expensive perfume. We read that it's worth 300 denarii at least. Now a denarii is worth one day's wage.

[14 : 00] wage. So in our day and age well I guess it's about a year's wage. Something like at least \$50,000. Think about it.

\$50,000 jar of ointment. not something you sort of tap into lightly.

Got to be a good wedding to go to to put this stuff on you before you go. Now either Mary and her family must be very wealthy to be able to afford it huh?

Or it might be some family heirloom that's been passed down from generation to generation but whatever the case she anoints Jesus' feet with it and then does something shocking wipes his feet with her hair.

it's against Jewish customs for a woman to appear before a man with her hair untied let alone to wipe his feet with her hair and the fragrance of this perfume fills the house.

[15 : 25] Can you imagine the scene pouring out something that everyone knows is absolutely extremely valuable on someone's feet not their head not their face not their wrists not their earlobes but their feet and then wiping his feet with her hair.

What do you think about it? What do you think about it? Would you if you were Mary would you do it?

would you if you were not Mary encourage your wife your sister to do it?

Well Judas by way of contrast sees devotion to Jesus as a waste of money. we see his dark heart exposed.

Look at it with me. Judas Iscariot one of his disciples the one who was about to betray him said why was this ointment not sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor?

[16 : 50] He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief and having charged the money bag he used to help himself to what was put in it. He wanted to get his grubby hands on the money.

Judas again enters the scene we haven't heard about him since chapter 6 where we're told he's going to betray Jesus and the disciples didn't know at the time but when John writes he cannot but think of Judas the grub who betrayed Jesus that's how he remembers him sold out on Jesus betrayed him for 30 pieces of silver Judas is Mary's devotion Jesus though commends Mary's devotion Jesus said leave her alone so that she may keep it for the day of my burial for the poor you'll always have with you but you do not always have me Judas is rebuked now friends there can be a bit of Judas in all of us I think be the Judas in me we too could think of other things that the money could be used for couldn't we honestly but

Judas is a thief and just wants to use the money to get his grubby hands on it he doesn't have any concern for the poor really and you can see there's a tension to grapple with here here's a tension right Judas makes an idealistic statement right and he puts compassion for the poor against devotion to Jesus do you see the paradigm compassion for the poor against devotion to Jesus Jesus as form of social action is nothing but an excuse for personal gain personal greed aggrandisement you can imagine it aren't I good and I give all this money to the poor but really his heart is not in he wants money for himself got nothing to do with love or depressed or worship for Jesus got nothing to do with that he doesn't care for either how could someone spend so much time with

Jesus but then fail to worship him but fail he does there are plenty of people who know lots about Jesus but fail to worship him as he is who he is it's clear that discipleship is more than just knowledge of Jesus isn't it it's knowledge that transforms our lives to be more and more like him that's what's got to be happening which leads to a willing sacrifice of things which might be dear to us that should be devoted to him we learn at least two things from Jesus the act of Mary's is much more than she thought isn't it the day of Jesus burial is near and what she does actually covers more than just his feet what she does has been preemptive of his burial it was a practice to wrap a body in linen and spices at ointment his burial now well he knows it's near but they might not think it's so near but

Jesus saying it's coming and coming faster than you might think second there'll always be the poor always be the poor to help they'll always be around Jesus might not physically be around but will always have the poor amongst us Judas and everyone else will have plenty of time to care for the poor now the question is why will the poor always be around us why will always be poor around us well it's not because of the system let me tell you that it's not because of the system it's not like you can change the system and you'll fix poverty that won't happen it's not due to feudal laws lords it's not due to communism it's not due to capitalism it's not due to monarchies or republicans it's not the system the sinful heart causes poverty and perpetuates the poverty cycle that's what it is doesn't matter how much money you throw at poverty it will not bring an end to poverty in the world it just won't

[22 : 07] Jesus promises us that there'll always be poverty there'll always be poor in the world it might alleviate the symptoms in one place for a while but poverty will raise its ugly head in all kinds of places it's sin that needs to be fixed there's nothing good about poverty at all the sage of proverbs said in proverbs chapter 30 verse 8 give me neither poverty nor riches remove far from me falsehood and lying give me neither poverty nor riches feed me with food that's I need or need for me lest I be full and deny you and say who is the lord or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God so I don't want too much otherwise I forget you God I don't want not enough otherwise I might bring shame and dishonour upon your name by stealing things and profane your name neither poverty nor riches the scriptures tell us contentment is great gain we'll have opportunity to help the poor until Jesus returns again and the poverty cycle only ends through the gospel of

Jesus changing hearts of people both the poor and the rich who rule over them that's why organisations like compassion are so good because they are keen to see poverty eliminated in communities through the power of the gospel and partnership with local churches that's why our family supports compassion I'd encourage you to as well I wonder if our hearts are inclined towards the poor do we care for the poor who are around us in all kinds of ways for the widow for the orphan well next the chief priests they have their hearts exposed in verses 9 to 12 of chapter 12 of John's gospel 9 and 10 we see 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'd raised from the dead now listen to this verse 10 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 they now want both Jesus and Lazarus dead really dead news gets out that Lazarus and Bethany had dinner with Jesus and many of the Jews start believing in Jesus he's someone who can do extraordinary things wonderful signs even bring the dead back to life Jesus is someone worth following I mean wouldn't you if you saw him raise someone from the dead wouldn't you follow him but not the chief priests the religious hierarchy resent both

Lazarus and Jesus now it's tough being Lazarus and one minute you're dead raised alive again unbound from the bandages next thing the religious hierarchy want to kill you again once wasn't enough tough being a friend of Jesus get too close to him get too close to Jesus and the religious hierarchy want you dead as well nothing much has changed over the years still the same those who loved Jesus would commend him and suffer for doing so it's nothing new this cancel culture that we live in cancel culture has an elite group of people who influence the masses and they maintain that power by silencing those who disagree with them that's the kind of thing that cancel culture does and it gets established it marginalizes minorities who do not agree with the establishment rules by power and intimidation instilling fear in a society so affected by it be careful

Australia Christians are for dialogue and engaging in all kinds of matters on which people differ about we don't shoot the messenger but they want Jesus and Lazarus dead well the next day Jesus enters Jerusalem and there's some great expectations he's welcome with great excitement we're going to see this crowd fickle crowd over the weeks ahead the next day Jesus goes great expectations in verses 12 to 15 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 and Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it just as written fear not daughter of Zion behold your king is coming sitting on a donkey's colt it's psalm 118 blessed is he who comes in the name of the

[27 : 55] Lord the song that the pilgrims would sing on their way up to Jerusalem encouraging each other as they went it was also understood to be a reference to the Davidic king the long expected king to come which is certainly what the pilgrims say in their very next breath but there's more they recognise the one who comes as king John chapter 12 verse 13 they recognise him as the one who comes in the name of the king as the king of Israel kings rule kings save kings are powerful kings provide kings protect kings shepherd the crowd speaks for things greater than they comprehend quoting Zechariah chapter 9 blessed is the king of Israel come with me to Zechariah chapter 9 it's just a couple of pages before in the old testament Zechariah chapter 9 so just turn back Matthew mark Luke and then a couple of books back into the old testament you'll find Zechariah not a bad name for a child Zechariah chapter 9 pick it up at verse 9 rejoice greatly

O daughter of Zion shout aloud O daughter of Jerusalem behold your king is coming to you righteous and having salvation is he humble and mounted on a donkey on a colt the foal of a donkey now the daughter of Zion equals the daughter of Jerusalem equals the people of God God's holy people verse 10 I will cut off the chariots from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem and the battle of Israel anointed one comes to save victoriously brings peace to the nations going to rule over the nations that's who he is and God will make Israel twice as prosperous as it was before you see in verse 12 then come down to verse 17 for how great is his goodness and how great his beauty grain shall he make the young men flourish and new wine the young women the Lord is going to be flourishing it's going to be great when the king of Israel comes the expectation was for a peaceful king back to

John chapter 12 and prosperous with prosperity without violence the king doesn't enter Jerusalem in a war chariot that's not how he comes to Jerusalem he gets on a donkey a young donkey at that nothing powerful and prestigious about that when this king comes not like the kings of our world to parade their nuclear weapons and their armies before them no this king just comes on a donkey a young one at that the comparison might be something like an F-18 fighter jet versus a 80cc sort of two stroke motor scooter that kind of difference it doesn't make much sense to the disciples though that this happens John chapter 12 see verse 16 they couldn't get it verse 16 John chapter 12

Matthew Mark Luke John chapter 12 verse 16 verse Godaps chapter sometimes but Hopefully we get it this is how the king comes to conquer the Romans in Jerusalem.

But after the resurrection from the dead, then it all makes sense. Jesus is glorified. Now, the disciples didn't get it.

[31 : 57] And the Pharisees didn't get it. The religious leaders didn't get it. And the chief priests want him dead. Now, let's just consider Jesus from Indoor 2. So, what's our attitude towards him?

How are your hearts struck this morning? Mary considers him worthy of extravagant worship.

For he's the one who shows his great power to raise the dead. Who's gracious and kind. Her worship is costly and extremely undignified in the eyes of the world.

And she's wiping his feet with her hair. She doesn't care what people think about her. She knows what she thinks about Jesus.

That's important. And for those of us who follow Jesus, I can't but help think of Romans chapter 12. That we present our bodies as living sacrifices.

[33 : 08] That we recognise his greatness. That we recognise the depths of his love, his death for me. And he's rising again. And that our reasonable response, our logical offering, is not a year's wages.

Far from it. Our reasonable response is a lifetime of living for him. In all the fullness of what that looks like.

Whether it's prosperity or poverty. And for those who might be considering Jesus, can you see that what Mary sees in Jesus that causes her devotion to him.

Something far, far greater than earthly treasure is available and is worthy of worship. The one who has authority to raise the dead is here.

the rightful king to whom all life and worship should be given to. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, thank you for our gathering around your word this morning.

[34 : 25] Thank you that Jesus is indeed the one who can raise the dead. Thank you that indeed Jesus is the one that we can put our hope in. Please help us to live in rightful worship of him.

Counting our lives as nothing but him as worthy of all things. We pray it in Jesus name.
Amen.