

May 16/17, 2020

You Must Die to Live

These Things are Written that You May Believe Series

John 12:12-36

Pastor Bryan Clark

One reason that I think a lot of Christians are maybe dissatisfied or disappointed with their Christian life, maybe some of them even disillusioned and walk away, is because, in a sense, they have created their own Jesus. They've created Jesus in their own image, that fits their own expectation, their own desires, their own agenda. And then when that Jesus doesn't come through for them, they feel cheated. They feel disappointed, sometimes disillusioned and walk away. So this is common. You have, for example, the political Jesus where people are sure Jesus is on their side politically. You have the prosperity Jesus. You have the healing Jesus. You have the genie-in-a-lamp Jesus where I rub the lamp and I get three wishes; if I don't get my wishes, then I feel cheated. Maybe today people have the Alexa Jesus where it's, "Jesus, turn on my TV; Jesus, lower the temperature; Jesus, make me breakfast." It's like Jesus is there to do whatever I need Him to do, like a little errand boy. I know it's common, people have a kind-of-a comfort Jesus that they can put in their back pocket and, in times of need, they pull Jesus out when they want some comfort. And then they want to put Him back away and go on with their lives, and, ultimately, people end up disappointed and hurt by that. The truth is the only way to really experience the life that your soul longs for is to learn and to understand, to believe and to follow Jesus as He reveals Himself in the Scriptures. That's what we want to talk about today.

So, again, we're in the Gospel of John, Chapter 12. We're going to pick it up in verse 12. Last week we ended with Mary anointing the feet of Jesus. That would have been in Bethany, less than two miles from Jerusalem, and on a Saturday evening. So the next day is Sunday—what we refer to as Palm Sunday. We pick it up in verse 12:

Now 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 and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, "Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel." (*NASB, John 12:12-13)

So John describes a **large crowd**. When you try to find out what the population was of Jerusalem in the first century, there's a lot of disagreement. It ranges from, maybe, 50,000 up to a hundred thousand. But during the time of the feasts—so three significant times of the year—the city would swell to, guesses range from 250,000 to Josephus who put it at over two million. So the city expanded dramatically. The people that had come from various areas to visit, would camp around the city and many of them, probably a majority, would camp somewhere in the Kidron Valley. So, there's Jerusalem and then there's the Kidron Valley and then it goes up the other side to the Mount of Olives. So a lot of the people would have been there. We're talking about thousands and thousands and thousands of people.

So, Jesus is in Bethany, and Bethany is kind of on the northeast side of Jerusalem—on the back side of the Mount of Olives—so around the base and kind of up over the ridge. He would have stopped at Bethphage where he would have picked up the donkey, and then would have come into the Kidron Valley and up into Jerusalem and directly into the temple.

So, when John is saying that **they went out to meet Him**, that's very precise language. It's the exact language used to describe people going out to welcome back a king who's been out fighting battles. One of the interesting things to think about is that this exact route would have been a route, for example, that King David would have often used to come back with his army from battle. The people would leave the city, go in the valley, go up the valley, and welcome the victorious king back. So John is using his language very carefully here to help us understand what's going on. They're using **palm branches**, which would be date palms which would have been readily available there in the valley. But the palm branches had significant meaning to the Jews. It was a picture of victory. It was on a lot of their coinage, and would have been commonly used as a way of celebrating a great victory.

So we talked about this. Three months earlier in Jerusalem would have been the Feast of Dedication, what we refer to as Hanukkah. That's celebrating the time when Judas Maccabees entered Jerusalem in 165 B.C. to rededicate the temple back to the God of the Hebrews. And when he did that, there would have been a parade, waving palm branches, welcoming him into the city for this dedication. So it was very much a part of their culture, and so it's very symbolic of a king and victory and entering into the city. They begin to **shout**. Literally, the language is they were continually shouting **Hosanna**—which means *save now*—and then, **“BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD,”** which is a quote from Psalm 118. It's a psalm that would have been very familiar to these people. It's one of the psalms of ascent. It was used three times a year during the time of the feasts, basically sung by choirs to welcome the pilgrims to the city for the feasts as they would arrive in Jerusalem. So they're singing this song. It would have been sung, for example, every morning by a choir for the Feast of the Tabernacles. It would have been sung during the Feast of Dedication, certainly sung during the Feast of Passover. So it's a song they knew well, but they add to it **“even the King of Israel,”** which is not in the psalm. As a matter of fact, that would be a very different direction from where the psalm is going.

So John gives all of that to help us understand this was not a neutral welcoming party. This was thousands and thousands of Jews, many of them from up north around Galilee where Jesus had done many more signs. They were identifying Jesus as the **King**, and this was the victory party and they were expecting Him to come into Jerusalem to set Himself up as King and deliver them from Roman oppression. Verse 14:

Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, “FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY’S COLT.” These things His disciples did not understand at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him. So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised from the dead, continued to testify about Him. For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign. So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him.” (Vs. 14-19)

So all four of the Gospels record this event—what we call Palm Sunday—but each of them records different details because each has a different purpose. John doesn't record much about the donkey, other than Jesus climbs on a donkey and enters. From the other Gospels we know that, from Bethany, he got to Bethphage. That's where He picked up the donkey, and it's a fulfillment of prophecy from Zechariah, chapter 9, verse 9. What's interesting about that is that kings don't enter the city on donkeys. They enter on a warhorse; they enter on a chariot. But donkeys were animals of peace, so when someone was coming to a city on a donkey, it might be a merchant, it might be a priest. But it

was someone who is coming peacefully. And so it's interesting, both the prophecy and Jesus' fulfillment of that, is John's way of saying that what the people are expecting, what they're wanting, what their agenda is, is going to be in conflict with why Jesus has actually come to the city.

He also goes on then and makes an editorial comment that the disciples—which he would include himself in that; he was an eyewitness to this—they didn't understand quite what was happening and how Jesus was fulfilling prophecy. It's only later that they would understand that. John said the same thing when Jesus cleansed the temple. They didn't understand what He was saying, and only later did they understand what Jesus had meant. John tells us there are a lot of people there who had witnessed the raising of Lazarus from the dead. They testified to others, and that was a big part of the excitement.

And then that paragraph ends with the Pharisees watching this and essentially saying, "We may have waited too long." **The world** is going out to Jesus, and we may have lost this battle. Now, obviously, when they say **the world**, it's hyperbole. They're exaggerating: "*Everybody's* going out to meet Jesus," but again, without realizing it, they've spoken prophecy. That is the whole point. Jesus came to draw all people—every tribe and tongue and nation—to Himself to save the world. So, they didn't realize how accurate they actually were with that statement.

Now, between Verses 19 and 20, Jesus would have gone into the temple, cleansed the temple a second time. The Synoptic Gospels record that. It's just not relevant to John's discussion here. He doesn't record that. Actually, he's going to go with that idea of the world going after Jesus and pick up the idea that that's true. The Greeks, meaning the Gentiles, were in town and they, too, are now seeking after Jesus. So, verse 20:

Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." (Vs. 20-23)

So the Greeks aren't technically Greeks; they're just non-Jews. They're Gentiles. And, in the language of the Old Testament, everybody that's not a Jew is a Greek. It was not at all uncommon that Gentiles would come to these great feasts. They respected the God of the Hebrews. They were seeking; they were searching. We'd probably, in today's language, call them *seekers*. They're trying to figure this out. So they're good, God-fearing people, trying to figure out what's true. But the Gentiles had a lot of limitations of what they could and couldn't do at the feasts. So they're seeking Jesus, and so they go to Philip. So why Philip? It's possible it's because Philip's name was actually a Gentile name, a Greek name. He was Jewish with a Greek name, which was not uncommon. Maybe that's why; we don't really know. Bethsaida's up closer to some of the Roman cities, so maybe there was already a relationship there. But he goes to Andrew, and Philip and Andrew go to Jesus, and Jesus makes a very curious statement when He says, "**The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.**" If you've been with us through our study of John, on a number of occasions Jesus said, "*My hour has not yet come.*" Oftentimes He would say that, and then disappear or escape in some way. So this is the first time where Jesus has identified, "It's time;" His hour has come.

It's interesting that it's these Gentiles that are seeking Jesus. When they say they want **to see Jesus**, they aren't talking about just seeing Him. The word means to interview or to talk to Him. They're seeking Him to know Him, wanting to have a relationship with Him. And so what Jesus is saying is,

“It’s time. It’s time to do what’s necessary so these Gentiles can have a relationship with God.” These Gentiles could enter the temple area, the large courtyard, and enter what was called the Court of the Gentiles. But, within that court, there was literally a wall. They could go up to the wall, but they couldn’t go past the wall. If they went past the wall, it was actually a capital offense. Paul, in Ephesians 2, refers to it as the *wall of hostility*. Now imagine, if you as a Gentile, are coming to believe that there is one God and He dwells in the Holy of Holies in the center of the temple, but you can only get this close and no closer. That’s what these people were experiencing and what Jesus was saying was it was time to change that and make it possible for anyone to have a relationship with God. So how does that happen? Verse 24:

“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.”

So, it’s a pretty common illustration. Jesus is just painting a simple picture that a seed must die and, by that, meaning that it’s dropped into the ground. It’s buried, and then a new shoot comes out of the ground and creates new life and bears fruit. Now, the botanists among us are going to tell us the seed doesn’t technically die, and that’s true. Jesus isn’t teaching a botany lesson, just a simple illustration, that for the seed to produce fruit, it’s got to go in the ground. It’s got to be buried, comes forth again, and bears fruit. It’s a beautiful picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and that’s what Jesus is saying. In order for both the Jews and the Gentiles to have a relationship with God, to find new life—like He said to Nicodemus, to be *born again*—Jesus is going to have to die. He’s going to be put in the ground; He’s going to rise from the dead; and that He will bear fruit. He will give life to many. So, that’s what Jesus is going to do.

So then, what is our part, as seekers and followers? Verse 25:

“He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to eternal life. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.” (Vs. 25-26)

So Verse 25 gets a little confusing. This shows up several times in the Gospels, and that’s this language of **love** and **hate**. It’s basically just a Jewish idiom or a Jewish saying that is meant to demonstrate a contrast or, some people say, preferences between one thing and another. So they aren’t terms of emotion, and that’s where it gets confusing. They’re not loving and hating emotionally; they’re just terms of preference or contrast. So, honestly, we don’t talk that differently ourselves. I might say, “I love a good steak, and I hate liver.” Now, I’m not getting all emotionally involved with either the steak or the liver; I’m just trying to make a point that I really love one and I don’t like the other at all. And then there’s all kinds of options in between. Well, that’s basically the same idea of the saying that one is dramatically opposed to the other.

So in verse 25 He says, **“He who loves his life.”** The word **life** there is the Greek word *psyche*. It’s where we get our word for psychology. Typically it’s translated *soul*. The idea here is not just being alive, but life, lifestyle—the ways of the world, the value system of the world—that that’s our lifestyle. When we love that life, He says we will **lose it**. It basically means destroy it. So, it’s really interesting to think about. The whole reason we love it is because we want to protect it; we want to keep it. But, in insisting on our way, and doing things the way we want to—pushing our own agenda and trying somehow to get Jesus to fit into that—rather than preserving our lives, we end up destroying it and making a mess of things.

The alternative—**he who hates his life**. Again, this is just a term of contrast. It's not saying that you hate life and that you're miserable, and that's what's really spiritual. It's just saying you hate the value system of the world when you hate this longing to be my own God and have my own agenda, insisting on things my own way, when I'm living for myself. So, part of this is the context that these people, with their own agenda, are determined that Jesus must fit into their agenda, and, as long as you insist on that, you're going to end up destroying your life. But when you reject that, when you die to that, that's what He means with, "**who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.**" When it says "**to life eternal,**" that's a different word for **life**. It's the Greek *zoe*, which is talking about the *fullness of life*. So the difference is of following the ways of this world and my agenda and living for myself, and when I live that way, I make a mess of life. But when I choose, rather, to hate that way of life—so to die to it—then I actually end up keeping it. It's really interesting the way this is worded. **He who hates his life in this world will keep it**, meaning what Jesus is saying is not that if you follow Me, your life now will be terrible, but your life to come will be great. That's *not* what He's saying. He's saying, "If you insist on having your way, your life now is going to be terrible. You're going to make a mess of it. But if you die to that and choose, rather, My way, you're going to keep your life, meaning you're going to find the life that your soul longs for." That word **keep** means *protected*. You're going to actually find what your soul is looking for now, which is just a taste of what you'll experience in fullness—the *zoe* life—the ultimate life in the world to come. So this is a common message that Jesus gives. If you really want to live, you have to die. You have to die to live. You have to be willing to give up your control, your agenda, your insistence that Jesus somehow has to fit into your agenda and what you want. You die to that, and you surrender to Jesus and say, "Jesus, I want to follow You; I want what You want." That's where we find life. So again, "**If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also.**"

So that confirms our interpretation that Jesus is talking about, "What does it take to follow Me? If you're going to serve Me, you have to follow Me." And, in essence, to be a Christian, to experience new life in Christ, you follow Jesus all the way to the cross. Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ." So the old self dies with Christ. "He died *for me*." Part of experiencing His salvation is to acknowledge that I have a sin problem, that I need to repent of my sin; I need a Savior, and I follow Him to the cross. So I die to this idea that I can make myself righteous. I die to the thought that religion can make me righteous. I realize I need a Savior, so I follow Him, in essence, to the cross and He dies my death for me on the cross. Then I experience the resurrection—new life in Christ. But it's also, then, following Jesus. It's surrendering to Jesus—to His plan, to His purpose, to His way.

I referred earlier to *Alexa Jesus* where it's, "Jesus do this; Jesus do that." That's not the way it works. That's backwards. I surrender to Jesus, and He says, "Bryan, do this; Bryan, do that," and I willingly obey. That's where I find life. That's where I'm going to find the life that my soul longs for. Most of these men would follow Jesus all the way to the point of death. John is probably the only one that probably died of old age. The rest of them, literally, died for the cause of Christ. And part of what Jesus is saying is, "This is what I did for you, and I'm asking you, then, to sacrifice for Me, for the cause of Christ, and to live for the things that will matter forever."

Starting, then, in Verse 27, Jesus says:

"Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose, I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name." (Vs. 27-28a)

Maybe if we're tempted to think, when Jesus says you have to die to live, you need to serve Me, you have to follow Me, we're tempted to think that's just too much to ask. So Jesus is coming back, as

John is recording it, and reminding us of His agony and suffering in going to the cross *for us*. So when He says **His soul became troubled**, that word **troubled** we've seen before. It's a word that means *agitated or stirred up*. It's the word that was used to describe the pool of Bethesda. When the water *stirred up*, people would try to get into it. It's the word that was used of Jesus when He was at Lazarus' tomb, and He was *stirred up*. So this means He's emotionally *stirred up*. This is a very difficult moment.

Most people are familiar with Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, but it's helpful to understand, it didn't start in the Garden of Gethsemane. We're now several days before the crucifixion and He's feeling the emotional stress, the agony, over what He knows is coming. There's a tendency to treat Jesus like He's just some sort of a robot that had no real feelings, and it didn't bother Him and He's just going to go through this thing like some sort of a machine. He was fully human in every way! He is about to go through a horrific torture and death, and it's just days away and He's feeling the agony of this. So that's what he's referring to there, that He was **troubled**. So He's asking the question, **"What should I say?"** "Should I ask the Father to save Me, you know, take Me home? Let's skip this part of the story?"

In a sense, I think what Jesus is saying is, "If I was like the Jews who just want their agenda, who just want their way, who are just in it for themselves, I would just ask the Father to save Me and go home." But the whole point is He had come to die on a cross for the sins of the world. That was the point; that was the purpose. So He's not going to ask the Father to deliver Him, but rather to fulfill the purpose for which He came. So He's turning around, then, and asking His followers, "If I did this for you, I'm asking you then to follow Me...to trust Me...to sacrifice for Me." Verse 28:

Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." So the crowd of *people* who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him." Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." (Vs. 28b-32)

So this is the third time where God's voice from heaven has spoken audibly on behalf of Jesus—so His baptism, the transfiguration, and now here. So a voice comes from heaven and the people are trying to figure out, "Was that thunder; was it an angel?" and Jesus lets them know, "I didn't need it. You know, the Father did that for you so that you could know I am who I say I am."

Now, in verse 31, **"Now judgment is upon this world,"** what Jesus says here is very interesting. The judgment of God is already on the earth. We learned this in Chapter 3. We learned that we're not waiting for a judgment someday; we're already judged. We all are sinners and, as a result of that sin, we're separated from God. We're already *under judgment*. It's not a bunch of people that are, one day, going to die and stand in a long line, and God is at a big desk and He's going to look through a book and decide if you're up or down. That scene is never going to happen. But we understand the judgment has already been rendered. Because I'm a sinner, I'm separated from God. I can't have a relationship with God until my debt has been paid. So we've learned we're already under that judgment. That's why we need to be saved. That's why we need to be rescued. It's only through Jesus that things can be made right again. But it's also true that judgment on the earth is about to come, in the sense that Jesus is about to deal with it. The moment Jesus hangs on the cross, the judgment will be dealt with, will be handled, as we talked about last week. The debt will be paid and

makes it possible for God to offer salvation, the forgiveness of sin, new life in Christ. So this is a moment in history where the judgment is about to be dealt with.

But He also says, “**Now the ruler of this world will be cast out.**” **Now**, meaning, “This is about to happen.” The grammar here is what we would call punctiliar. (I know you’re really excited to know that.) But what it means is this is a moment in time. This is not a battle that will rage for years and years and years. At the moment Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world, at that moment Satan was defeated. At that moment, death died. At that moment, the judgment was judged. And Jesus’ payment for the sins of the world was counted as acceptable by God the Father.

This is the fulfillment of thousands of years of a promise. It goes all the way back to Genesis, chapter 3, when Adam sinned and created the situation that we find ourselves in. Before you even turn the page of the Bible, God already promises that He will do something through the seed of a woman in order to bring life back out of death, that He would crush the head of the serpent, and He would ultimately win. So that promise has been developed; it’s been pictured; it’s been re-promised for thousands of years. What Jesus is saying is this is the moment when the head of the serpent is crushed. The time has come. This is an amazing moment in history when Jesus is fulfilling the promise and Satan is cast out or crushed once and for all! Now, he is still actively doing all the damage he can do on his way out, but he is defeated. He knows he’s defeated. Death is defeated. Jesus won. But in this moment, it’s days away, and that’s what Jesus is identifying.

How will that happen? Verse 32, “**If I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself.**” So that’s a reference to crucifixion. The Jews typically killed through stoning, the Romans, through crucifixion. This has come up several times in the Gospel of John. It always means crucifixion. So Jesus is saying, “In order to fulfill that promise, in order to pay the debt, then I’m going to have to die. I’m going to have to be **lifted up** to make that payment once for all time, and that will make it possible for all people, meaning people of every tribe and tongue and nation, to experience salvation, forgiveness of sin, and new life in Christ.”

So, this starts with the Jews welcoming Jesus to Jerusalem, thinking He’s going to establish Himself as king. It moves to the Gentiles that want to know Jesus, to Jesus moving to what will be necessary for that to happen. The gospel is the most inclusive message out there. I know people today like to criticize that the gospel is exclusive, and what they mean by that is, when we say Jesus is the only way to God, that is exclusive. But what they’re saying is that they want to live their lives their own way. They want their agenda. They want Jesus in *their own image*. They want a Jesus that’s convenient. They want a Jesus that doesn’t really ask much of them or interrupt their lives, or maybe it’s even a religion without Jesus. But we should be our own gods and we should have the right to say what roads lead to God. And if that’s your belief system, then what Jesus says *is* exclusive.

But the reality is, on the basis of what Jesus has done, He makes it possible for *everyone, equally*, to receive His gift of eternal life. It doesn’t matter if you’re rich or poor. It doesn’t matter what the color of your skin is. It doesn’t matter if you’re powerful or if you live on the street. It doesn’t matter if you’re the nicest person in the room or you’re the greatest sinner in the room. It doesn’t matter! The salvation Jesus offers is freely given—as a gift—to anyone who chooses to receive it. And that’s why He said “**I will draw all men (or all people) to Myself.**”

Well, the crowd understands what He’s saying, and they don’t really like it. Verse 33:

But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. The crowd then answered Him, “We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of man?” (Vs. 33-34)

So they are rightly understanding that Jesus is saying He is about to die, and they don't know what to do with this. Jesus has identified Himself as the **Son of Man**, and now the Son of Man is going to die? They thought that the Old Testament taught that the Christ would live on His throne forever, so they don't know what to do with it. So, they were partially right. They were hearing Jesus is talking about His death, and the Old Testament does say that Jesus will sit on the throne of David forever. But what they, like the religious crowd throughout the Gospel of John have not understood, is that Jesus first must go to the cross to pay for the sins of the world. But they're thinking, “Wait a minute; we want a king. We want to be delivered from the Romans. We want You to fulfill our agenda. We're not interested in a Christ who is about to die.”

So Jesus said to them, “For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.” (Vs. 35-36a)

So Jesus is responding and reminding them that He is the **Light**. It's something He's told them again and again in the Gospel of John. By that, He means *revelation*—that God has actually taken on human flesh and come to earth to tell them how to be saved. This is the **Light**; this is the truth, but they don't want to listen. And what Jesus is saying here is there are only a couple more days. “I won't be among you much longer, and you don't listen.”

When He says, “**The Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light,**” it's an imagery of night in the ancient culture. Let's imagine you're out in the wilderness; you have a lamp, but the lamp is running out of oil. You don't have time to wander around and sightsee. You'd better walk and get home before the oil runs out and the lamp goes out. So that's the imagery here; the lamp is almost out. You'd better walk while the Light is shining; because, if you don't, you're going to walk in the darkness and, if you walk in the darkness, you're certain to lose your way.

Now this is an amazing moment in history, when the God of the universe has actually taken on human flesh and He has walked among them. He has done so many miraculous signs to convince them He really is who He says He is. He's sent from the Father to tell them, “This is who I am; this is what I've come to do; this is how you're saved.” Now there are only a couple of days left before the Light is gone, and He's pleading with them to listen or they're going to miss the salvation that He offers.

The problem is they are so determined to maintain their own theology, their own religion, their own agenda, their own opinion, it's like, “No, that's not who Jesus is! Jesus is supposed to be the political Jesus. He's supposed to march into Jerusalem. He's supposed to set up a kingdom. He's supposed to deliver us from the Romans—and He's supposed to do that forever. That's the Jesus we want and, if you're not that Jesus, we're not interested.” You have the religious Jews that are unwilling to let go of their religion in order to listen and believe in Jesus. So what's going to happen is, even though God Himself is begging them to listen to Him, they're going to reject Jesus, because Jesus isn't what they wanted Him to be. What an amazing moment in history!

So here we are 2000 years later and, honestly, it's not that much different. Think of it this way. How many people in America consider themselves to be Christians? And Christian, by definition, is a Christ follower. Studies show it is somewhere around 75 percent self-identify as Christ followers. So, if you were to sit down with these people and you were to explain to them what Jesus just said—that He came to be the Savior of the world; you have a sin problem, and Jesus has to die for your sin. The only way you're going to find life is if you surrender, if you choose to acknowledge Jesus as your Savior. If you believe He died on the cross for your sin, and reject the value system of this world in order to find the life that your soul is looking for, of that 75 percent, what percentage of people would say, "That's exactly what I want"? I'm going to guess it's a much smaller percentage. Many of the people would say, "I don't think so. That's not what I signed up for. I mean, I want the prosperity Jesus. I want the happy Jesus. I want the Alexa Jesus. I want the political Jesus. I want the care Jesus. I want the genie-in-the-bottle Jesus. I want to live my life my way, on my terms, and just have Jesus to be someone I visit at church now and then." But they're not interested in dying to themselves. They're not interested in dealing with their sin. They're not interested in what Jesus has to say about what He did and what is necessary to experience salvation.

John has told us, **"These things are written that you might believe that Jesus in the Christ and, in believing, you might have life in His name."** I pray that will be true for you.

Our Father, we're thankful that, when we were lost in our sin, Jesus came to die on a cross to be our Savior. God, help us to understand that Jesus did not come to be whatever we want Him to be; He came that we might surrender, that we might die to ourselves, in order to follow Him and live for Him. Because, Jesus, you remind us it's only there that we ultimately find the life that our souls long for. Lord, this is what we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE
Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1987, 1988,
The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.
Lincoln Berean Church, 6400 S. 70th, Lincoln, NE 68516 (402) 483-6512
Copyright 2020 -Bryan Clark. All rights reserved.

You Must Die to Live

That You May Believe

John 12:12-36

Pastor Bryan Clark

Opening Discussion

1. In verses 12-16, we're presented with an interesting scene. Based on the size of the crowd, one would imagine that Jesus is parading into the city on a mighty steed. Instead, he's riding a tiny donkey.

→ **Read Zechariah 9:9-10.**

→ The crowd expected their Messiah to be a warrior king. However, as we've seen throughout John, Jesus behaves much differently than expected. **What type of king is Jesus? What evidence supports this?**

→ Throughout John, we see people respond differently to Jesus (worship, misunderstanding, rejection, seeking, confusion, questioning, fear, etc.). **In light of this, how has your relationship with Jesus been this week?**

2. In verses 17-19 (and 12:9-11 from last week), we learn many believed in Jesus because of Lazarus having been raised from the dead. His life was such a strong testimony; the Jews wanted him dead as well.

→ **Read 1 Peter 3: 13-18.**

→ **In what ways does your life display the power of Jesus?**

→ **What, if anything, keeps you from sharing the hope you have?**

3. In verses 23-26, we learn that a seed has great potential for life, but it can only multiply if it dies.

→ **Read Philippians 2:1-8.**

→ **This week, what attitudes or behaviors have you put to death so that you may have the fullness of life promised by Jesus?**

→ **Who in your life can you serve this week? What steps can you take to love them well?**

4. Last week, Bryan explained that no matter the evidence, there are still people who won't believe in Jesus. In verse 29, we see another example of this. God spoke to everyone, but some only heard thunder.

→ **There are many different spiritual disciplines (prayer, worship, bible study, fasting, fellowship, rest, meditation, generosity, etc.) What spiritual disciplines can help you hear the voice of God better?**

→ **Throughout history, God has spoken to people through Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and the people He has put in our life. Although His voice might be hard to hear sometimes, we know it will never contradict Scripture. Have you ever felt God speak to you? If so, what was the situation?**

→ **Has anything from Bryan's sermon or this discussion stood out to you? If so, why?**