

| <b>Series:</b><br>Portraits of Jesus   | <b>Reference:</b><br><i>John 12</i> | <b>Title:</b><br>The King | <b>Date:</b><br>04.26.2020 |
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| <b>Website Writeup:</b>  |                                     |                           |                            |
| This is Jesus inauguration ceremony & Kings are to be followed. But sometimes we make kings out to be in our own image, puppets on a string. How've we done this as Christians, and how can we truly follow Jesus, our King? This is what we explore in John 12. |                                     |                           |                            |

Turn with me to John 12:12-19, the story of Jesus triumphal entry into Jerusalem surrounding Passover. It says...*The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup>They took palm branches & went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!"* (which means 'save')

*"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the king of Israel!" <sup>14</sup>Jesus found a young donkey & sat on it, as it is written: <sup>15</sup>"Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt."<sup>16</sup>At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him & that these things had been done to him.*

*<sup>17</sup>Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb & raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. <sup>18</sup>Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. <sup>19</sup>So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"*

John paints a portrait of Jesus as King. This is His inauguration ceremony & they're shouting "Save us, King Jesus!"

Matthew 21:10 says when Jesus entered Jerusalem the city was stirred! Joyous, yelling, waving palm branches, laying their cloaks down before Jesus on a donkey! It's Passover. Jesus has healed people, fed thousands with leftovers, challenged, honored women, doted on kids, had driven out demons, brought hope & even raised Lazarus from the dead! He must be the Messiah! So they wave palm fronds & shout, thinking He's gonna overthrow Rome! Show some respect, genuflect, get down on one knee for King Jesus, the Messiah! A great day for Israel.

Jerusalem's flooded with the faithful. Imagine the nationalistic pride rounding the bend on the Mt of Olives, looking down at the Temple shining in the distance, people on the road, gathered for Passover. You'd be proud to be Jewish that day. But...what's Passover?

It's outlined in Exodus 12 when the Israelites, enslaved in Egypt, were called to sacrifice a lamb & paint the doorposts of their homes with its blood. That night God passed through Egypt & struck down every firstborn of person & animal, bringing judgment on all the gods of Egypt. It's the last of the plagues which broke Pharaoh's grip causing him to release the Israelites - a battle of Kingship between God & Pharaoh, where God claimed, *"I am the Lord. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you*

*when I strike Egypt.*" So the blood of these sacrificial lambs both saved them & set them free from oppression.

Every year Jesus made this trek commemorating Passover which foreshadowed His own coming sacrifice. But this year's different - this was His last! Everything changing, the final Passover Lamb had come. A king who sacrifices Himself for His people.

Luke 19 (vv29b-30) tells us, as Jesus was approaching Jerusalem that He sent two disciples to get a donkey for Him to ride on, even explaining right where they'd find it. Jesus chose to ride a donkey this day. A horse would've been fitting for a conquering king, but a donkey symbolized a kings coming in peace. We realize He's orchestrating this plan. He's made arrangements for this donkey, a symbol of a king coming in peace & rides straight into town. He's coming from Jericho about 19 miles away & stayed over in Bethany, just outside of Jerusalem, with Mary, Martha & Lazarus when He sends for this donkey.

And Luke 19:35-37 says...*They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt & put Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup>As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. <sup>37</sup>When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen...*

More royal imagery, cutting branches, laying them on the road, along with clothing, practices reserved for a king. We see it when Jehu was anointed King of Israel in 2 Kings 9 (vv12-13). Jesus knew exactly what He was walking into. He'd been very clear about who He was & what would happen to Him in Jerusalem during Passover. In John 12, just before this, it records how Mary, in worship of Him, poured perfume on his feet which cost a years wage, wiping them with her hair. Judas Iscariot got upset & Jesus explains she needed to do this in preparation for His burial - again foreshadowing His death just days away. In the Synoptic Gospels He pulled no punches, claiming He must go to Jerusalem, be handed over, be crucified & rise again.

Shut your eyes, imagine yourself on that road with palm fronds & clothing laid out before Him. He plods down the road on a donkey. As He approaches, He looks at you for a moment, everyone's screaming, "Hosanna (Save now)!" You're mesmerized. He looks right through you with a mixture of love & sadness. He's conflicted, willing to sacrifice, but saddened at people who in a few days will turn & yell, "Crucify Him!"

Focus on Jesus, let shouts fade to background. He knows you, everything you feel, think & do. Knows your heart, private moments, pride, fears, failures & accomplishments. None of which matters, as He goes to the cross for you. Your willing sacrificial lamb.

The moment's broken by the Pharisees yelling from the crowd, "*Teacher, rebuke your disciples!*" The Pharisees, who've plotted to kill Jesus, and Lazarus as well, because people are following Jesus in droves due to what He's had said & done, including raising Lazarus from the dead. They're scared the Roman authorities will react since everyone's treating Jesus as King, a direct challenge to Rome - so they actually plot murder.

Cut back to Jesus...He looks at you with a faint smile, then up to the Pharisees & with a loud laugh says, "*I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out!*"

At that moment you realize, this is the Messiah, your King, your God & you must follow Him wherever He goes...then He stops, starts to weep, looking over Jerusalem saying,

*"If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace - but now it is hidden from your eyes. <sup>43</sup>The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you & encircle you & hem you in on every side. <sup>44</sup>They will dash you to the ground, you & the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."*

He's alluding to the future destruction of the Temple in 70ad. He weeps for His people since they don't understand, He's the God King coming in peace, ushering in His kingdom of peace now - His kingdom is about power under, not power over people. Not there to play politics, but to change hearts & changed hearts, change the world. Jesus, God made flesh, but they won't recognize it. Maybe at that moment you wouldn't know where He's headed. But you do now - to the cross.

In Luke, just before this, He tells the parable of a man who became king against the will of his subjects. Sounds familiar in light of what will transpire in the next few days. These people would shout 'Hosanna our King' today, but would turn & scream 'Crucify Him' the next - they wanted a political conquerer. Their joy wouldn't last, since He refused to play that role. He's not here to take political sides, He's here to take over the world, one heart at a time!

He knew how hard it is to follow. His disciples asked to be first in the Kingdom. He responded, *"Can you drink the cup I'm drinking?"* Obviously, they could not. He said to John's Disciples when they came to ask if He's the one or should they expect another... *'go back & report to John what you hear & see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.'*

In His first sermon He proclaimed anointing to preach good news to the poor! The Beatitudes start with *'blessed are the poor for theirs is the kingdom of God'*! As He took His ministry into the streets, many of these followed. For the rich & educated the message was difficult - they had more to lose. The Rich Young Ruler went away sad because of his great wealth. The Pharisees pride of intellect, blind them to Truth.

But for the poor & oppressed His message frees. They flooded the Kingdom since the Gospel values, raises up, enriches, and brings hope & peace to them. But our danger today is to misinterpret due to the popular temptation to preach a gospel of socio-economic exclusion born out of philosophies like Critical Theory & Intersectionality.

Critical Theory says people can be divided into two groups, those with power, those without. And those with power always oppress the powerless, which isn't always true. The categories of Oppressed or Oppressor are based on group identity, such as race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, income, the list goes on. You can actually be an Oppressor in one category & the Oppressed in another due to your differing identities - which is called Intersectionality. For instance, two white men these days may be seen as Oppressors, but if one is gay, he's a little better off than the other, because he's oppressed as a homosexual.

So, Intersectionality seeks to measure levels of power & oppression - the more oppressed you are, the more moral authority you have according to Critical Theory.

There are three major conflicts between Christianity & Critical Theory.

Firstly, Critical Theory claims our value lies in our identities, whereas Christianity claims our value comes from being created in God's image.

Secondly, Critical Theory pits people against one another, whereas Christianity says God created us all equal - equally valuable, equally guilty of sin & equally able to find Grace & Mercy in Jesus. The Bible defines sin as anything which violates God's design for humankind, including oppression of others. But Critical Theory only defines sin as the oppression of others. Therefore, violence, jealousy, theft, anger & the like from the Oppressed are only considered excusable reactions to the Oppressor. This is because Critical Theory sees only oppression as sinful, the Oppressed are always innocent.

And thirdly, the solution of salvation is wrong as well, since Critical Theory says salvation's only found through social liberation achieved through activism. Whereas the Bible says all are guilty of sin & can find salvation only through the Gospel of Christ!

So we can't interpret that Jesus kingdom was reserved *only* for the poor & oppressed. David, Moses, Abraham, Nicodemus & Paul were living proof, the wealthy, powerful & educated are also in need & equally welcome in God's Kingdom. Likewise, people such as the Samaritan woman at the well, one we might consider to be oppressed, are equally culpable for their sin & also able to receive grace from Jesus. Everyone equal, according to the Gospel.

Are we following Christ, or making Him to conform to social theories? His concern must become our concern - primarily that God's glorified as people are saved from sin & death through Jesus sacrifice as symbolized in Passover. And the effects of one coming into His Kingdom is to take on the heart of God valuing all life including the Poor & Oppressed, and everyone else. We seek God's Glory through God's mission - reconciling people with the Father through Jesus' Passover sacrifice, ushering in His kingdom of peace & true freedom. The effects of such changed hearts are care & betterment of everyone around them...as our Creator God values life, Christians do as well.

Does our Jesus simply discuss politics, presidents & play favorites? Are we pouring Him into the mold of 'Self' as Jews tried to make Him a political conqueror? Do we also want a Christian conqueror, be he Conservative, or Progressive? Will we shout 'Hosanna' today & 'Crucify' tomorrow when He doesn't live up to expectations?

It's hard to follow King Jesus. He goes to the Cross loving, serving & suffering for people, even His enemies. He said, to find life I have to lose it. Jesus cares only for what the Father desires, which is different than our daily concerns. Philippians says *my attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who became obedient even to death on a cross*. I too should be willing to sacrifice. His words ring loudly in my ears, blessed is the one who doesn't fall away on account of me! Am I willing to follow through all the way to the Cross?

Today's a challenge to follow your King, not some facsimile thereof. Don't be confused... sometimes, we worry more about 'right thinking' rather than 'following' Jesus in 'right practice'. Sound doctrine & theology are important, I champion them often. But when 'right thinking' becomes only intellectual, failing to move us towards love, sacrifice & the desire for others to know Jesus, we're not following. Right thinking should lead to

gratitude expressed in right action & right action begins with a desire for others to know Him, bolstered by a heart of love & freedom for all. Our King died for these very people who screamed crucify...it's about Jesus' Kingship, not politics, or faulty social theories.

Conservative & Progressive alike cast aspersions on others from ivory towers, legislating their version of morality often without engaging real need. We've all met the conservative who votes pro-life, but won't ever take in a teenage mother & help raise her child. Or, the progressive who will march on city hall for civil rights, but never walk the streets of West Philly. Some of that morality may be biblically correct, but some isn't, as it's not born of Scripture. But right thinking also doesn't always translate to right attitudes either - it also misses the mark. Some exchange real practical love & Truth for votes & activism. It never works & only sows hatred & division.

Jesus is made to be a political figure in those models & we preach in the extreme, unrooted in Scripture on one end, or unreflective of God's heart on the other. To claim Jesus as King, we desire to be like the real Jesus, willing to go to the cross as He did for others. Calling people to repentance & salvation in Him, and higher into holiness & purity as found in His Word, since *His* moral directives are life-giving.

In some Christian circles, it's considered suspect, to concern ourselves too greatly with certain social issues, except in the voting booth. Perhaps since issues have been made to be such polarizing political hot-buttons. It's nothing less than satanic craftiness to pervert good causes, forcing us to take sides in order to be active in them; to be required to hate one group, in order to do good for another. We live under Christ's Lordship, called to loving truth & action as a result of it. Gratitude for His grace, leads to good-works which He prepared in advance for us to do (Eph 2:10). Which always begin with sharing His Gospel, as He said in Matthew 24:14...*"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."* And remember Matthew 28:18-20 is our great commission to go & make disciples of all nations. And we welcome the end, given it's the final establishment of God's peace & where true freedom's experienced!

Six:Eight has shown itself to speak truth & love practically. Our message isn't one of social activism, conversely it's about the Kingship of Jesus reflecting His heart of love in peace & true freedom. Activism's the humanistic endeavor which only polarizes, destroys unity & distances us from our true call to see people know Jesus. It's about power & defeat, not love & sacrifice. Likewise Christian intellectualism without practical action is only indifference.

Kingdoms are ruled by kings & kings are followed. Some truth often resides on both sides of issues, but Jesus is often found in the middle where dogmatic truth actually takes on God's heart. He's King. A Jesus thing, not a political thing. Worldly governments are inherently governed by force, not grace. Kingdom life is us coming under His lordship, with me & my church willing to sacrifice for others - rich, poor & everyone in between, as our King does, while we live under the tension of worldly authority.

Jesus' transcends politics & beckons us beyond culture. It's not that He doesn't inform our politics, but they're not the central place in which we act, because coercion can only

restrain outward behavior, it can't change hearts. Jesus can. Unlike Islam, we're not called to set up a theocracy - progressive or conservative.

It's a false hope to legislate morality in a pluralistic society & have it all work out. People don't react well to being forced to doing what I think is right. Right actions must be born of right hearts, not coercion. The temptation for control's overwhelming. Vote your conscience as informed by King Jesus, but pursue Him above all & don't buy into the lies.

Let's not make idols of socio-political processes or ideologies where law replaces grace & we forfeit the authority of Jesus. Unity under Him, not polarization into political camps. Each exploring Scripture together to find true conviction, allowing belief & value to be born of Gods Word & following Jesus to love our neighbor in word & deed.

Jesus stares at us from the back of that donkey, knowing our loneliness, pain, how unworthy & hardened we feel, what we've done, said, felt & think. None of which matters...He goes to the cross, paying the price for our innate sinfulness & hardness. Recognize the time of God's coming, now. Accept grace, be reconciled, either for the first time, or in recommitting your life to Him. He's listening. Shout, "Hosanna, save me!" Follow your King, allowing the gratitude of His grace to move us to share Him with others, bringing the kingdom of peace & freedom to all people. He promises life - eternal & abundant, so let's live for God's glory & God's mission.

We can't have Him & leave His teaching aside. We can't have Jesus, and also craft Him into our image. Jesus Himself asked, *'Why do you call me lord, lord, but do not do as I say?'*

### Questions for Study

1. Think back to a great celebration you participated in, what was it, and how did you feel?
2. Read Exodus 12:1-7 & 12-14 & 21-30 note details, think through & discuss the parallels between this passage & Jesus as the ultimate Sacrificial Lamb of God.
3. Read Luke 19:28-44 - what's the significance of vv21-44 in light of everyone celebrating in that moment?
4. How would you've felt at Passover the day Jesus entered Jerusalem? Imagine the scene, and what it would mean to you.
5. We know one day they yelled Hosanna, and the next Crucify - why? What were their expectations? What are ours? What does it mean to follow the 'true' Jesus? Think of the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 & also the commission call in Matthew 24:14 & 28:18-20.
6. Discuss the three differences of Critical Theory & Intersectionality found on PP3 & 4 of this sermon. How do we avoid social pressure in order to keep our Gospel commitment to King Jesus pure - how do we follow Jesus as both Savior & King?