



Sunday, May 30, 2021

Rev. Dr. Michael R. Fitzgerald, Senior Pastor

Sermon #42 from the Gospel of John

“The Potential of a Seed”

John 12:12-36 (King James Version)

Good morning! It’s a great day in God’s house! Thank you for being here—in person or via media as we continue in our study of John’s Gospel. The more I study this book, the more amazing it becomes. We’re stepping into the final week of Jesus’ life before the Cross of Calvary. He enters Jerusalem on the back of a donkey fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9.

We’re going right to Jesus’ words and see how He relates to being a seed—how His life is invested. We see Him coming into Jerusalem “City of Shalom (Peace)” for the last time. We’re thankful He gave His life outside that city so you and I might have the peace of salvation and the comfort of knowing we have an eternal home. That invitation and word is not just for a few people—it’s for the world! Jesus Christ gave Himself to save the world. It doesn’t matter what color you are, where you’re from or what you’ve done—He gave Himself that you and I might have life everlasting. What Good News! Let’s read verses 12-19.

“¹²On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed *is* the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. ¹⁴And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, ¹⁵Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. ¹⁶These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and *that* they had done these things unto him. ¹⁷The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. ¹⁸For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. ¹⁹The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.”

This passage is about Palm Sunday, celebrated before Easter Sunday—five days before Jesus’ crucifixion. We read how the dynamic and the personality of a crowd can change. On Palm Sunday we hear the joy that cannot be contained as they shouted “Hosanna!” Yet, five days later on Good Friday, some of them express anger that cannot be silenced when they say “Crucify Him!” I do believe many were the same people—a crowd can be stirred up and changed quickly. In Matthew 27:20, 22 we read: “²⁰But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas and destroy Jesus. ²²Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.”

On Palm Sunday, why is there such joy as Jesus enters Jerusalem? His ministry is at its apex, the highest point right now. People know about Him; His greatest miracle on earth just happened when He raised Lazarus from the dead in Bethany five miles outside Jerusalem. Some people had seen Lazarus and were joyful as they gathered to welcome Jesus. He was the “man of the hour” and was recognized highly. As He enters the city, people line the roads in excitement of what Jesus had accomplished in His life. Maybe they would have the opportunity to touch Him and see Him. “Hosanna” means “save us” or “save now”—the first two words in Psalm 118:25 are “Save now.” So the crowd fulfills that prophecy. This triumphal entry into Jerusalem is the biggest public celebration of Jesus’ ministry in all the Bible. Although Scripture doesn’t say, you can be sure

the Roman government watched Jesus coming into Jerusalem. Any time anyone would be proclaimed “king” they were worried. The religious leaders, those who hated Jesus because He pointed them out as fakes and phonies, were also in the crowd. They devised the plan to stir up the crowd and how to murder Him. In verse 19, people from around the world are coming to Him in adoration. The scribes and Pharisees say He has to be stopped. Jesus knew His welcome would be very temporary—the joy and Hosannas would fade away. Many waving palm branches that day would be shaking their fists five days later.

Jesus will be spending time in intense ministry before the cross comes. He arrived the same week as Passover when the Jewish nation was celebrating the high holy day of their release from slavery in Egypt. This was not by chance—it was ordained by the very mind of God before the foundations of the world were laid. Jesus coming into Jerusalem at Passover (Hebrew “Pesach”) was the day the Jews remembered freedom. No one gives a greater freedom than Jesus Christ; it comes at the cost of the cross. In this week, the population of Jerusalem increased as folks from around the world came for that “Pesach.” Some were Jews, others were Gentiles. As we continue with the passage, Greeks wanted to see Jesus. They approach the disciple, Philip, about meeting Jesus. They were most likely Gentiles who converted to the Jewish faith. They were godly men seeking God in their life. Let’s pick up with verse 20.

“²⁰And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: ²¹The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. ²²Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. ²³And Jesus answered them, saying, **The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.** ²⁴**Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.** ²⁵**He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.** ²⁶**If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.** ²⁷**Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.** ²⁸**Father, glorify thy name.** Then came there a voice from heaven, *saying*, I have both glorified *it*, and will glorify *it* again. ²⁹The people therefore, that stood by, and heard *it*, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. ³⁰Jesus answered and said, **This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.** ³¹**Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.** ³²**And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.** ³³This he said, signifying what death he should die. ³⁴The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man? ³⁵Then Jesus said unto them, **Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.** ³⁶**While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.** These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.” May God add His blessing to the reading of these precious words.

Everyone wants to meet Jesus; He’s at the height of His popularity. These Gentile Greek men know there’s something special about Him as the Son of God, the miracle worker. They approach Philip because he is the one disciple who has a Greek name. Philip tells them to wait; he goes to Andrew and they both take the Greek’s request to Jesus. Read verse 23. Jesus’ reply is to Philip and Andrew, not the Greeks. I believe He did meet with them but Scripture doesn’t record their conversation. He acknowledges to Philip and Andrew that His death is imminent—it’s not just for a few chosen people, not for a Jewish nation, not for a certain color or race—it’s for all the world to come to know God the Father. His death would be for all men, women, boys, girls, rich,

poor, slaves or free, Jew, Gentile—worldwide—atoning for every sin of any person who would come to Him in faith, trust, and belief. As this group of Greek men stand waiting, Jesus says to Philip and Andrew that people of all kinds are seeking Me; My hour is now here. Remember, Jerusalem is filled with the world that day. He then says “I will be glorified.” Why is that such an unusual word? He could have said “I’m going to be crucified.” The cross was before Him, just days ahead. Jesus is looking beyond the cross and what it will produce. Through the crucifixion, He’s going to be glorified. People will have the opportunity to be saved. After the cross He says “I will be glorified and it will be My joy to see men and women and boys and girls saved.” The agony of the cross will produce the joy of forgiveness. You have to go through the doorway of the cross to come to the open door of forgiveness. Remember this—as the human Son of Man, Jesus dreaded the cross. He was anxious about it and dreaded the pain. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He sweats drops of blood. He even asks His Father—“Is there any other way for salvation to be accomplished? If you can spare Me from this, Lord God, please do.” Read verse 27. The Greek root for the word “troubled” means extremely, emotionally, physically disturbed and anxious. He felt the weight of the cross on His shoulders. “Father, if you can’t spare me I’m here, present, and accounted for to go through this hour.”

What He says in verse 24 beginning with “Verily, verily” about taking a kernel of wheat is that seed is solitary and of little use. If you took that seed as food, it would be one bite and not satisfy any hunger. One seed is alone, but if you plant it in the ground it will die to its form as a seed; a plant will flourish and grow from it so that others may be fed from the wheat. You have to invest the seed in the ground—plant it in the proper soil so it can die to itself and grow into something bigger and more productive. Jesus is saying at the cost of the cross, I am planting my life and investing it. Through my one individual death on the cross as the very Son of God, I can produce salvation and forgiveness for every person of faith in the world. If I refuse the cross, my life would be more comfortable. I wouldn’t have to face the pain, agony, punishment, the emotional drain of the trial and the fakeness of it all. I wouldn’t have to be carried to the foot of the cross and lifted off the ground. If I refused the cross, millions upon millions would be hopelessly lost and not have one opportunity to witness God the Father. Here’s His decision: Either save myself and let billions be lost or lose my life to the cross so I can offer salvation to every person on earth. We know His decision.

He applies that principle to us who believe, know, and follow Him. Read verse 25. “Hate” in that verse is the Greek word “miseo” which means to disregard and lay aside your life and needs as being entirely important. Lay aside your life so you can look at the life of someone else through the eyes of Jesus. Look at someone else’s life and realize He has a ministry for you to give that person the love of Jesus Christ. Look at others as Jesus did. He implies there are people who only concentrate on themselves; the world revolves around them. I take care of me; I don’t care about anyone or anything else. I’ll build a mansion for me; I’ll make all the money I can for me; I’ll stockpile my pantry for me. Jesus says you enjoy that life for now because one day—very soon—you will lose it. It will never be restored to you again.

Praise God for those who say Jesus Christ, You are my Savior, and I will live for You. I will look away from myself and when circumstances permit, I will live sacrificially for You. Help me, Lord, to see the world is bigger than my little sphere in it. Help me see others, help me see needs, help me see where I can give my talents to help someone else. Help me not to be so self-centered that I miss the chance to help a child, friend, co-worker, family member. Help me live the model of Jesus who gave Himself and invested Himself so the world can be saved. Help me to invest myself so that someone else can know You, feel Your love, and be provided for by Your grace. I’m the seed, now plant me, Lord, so that I can be productive to someone else. Life

is not about me; it's about leaving a legacy of the Savior we serve and leave in the hearts of people. This is exactly what Jesus did. He asks us to see Him as the model that we invest our lives so others see Jesus in us.

When I depart this world, I pray that people think more about the Jesus I serve than about my life. I pray you say Amen to that—not for me, but for you! I pray this mindset will overtake us—we want to decrease and allow Jesus to increase in us. We want to leave a legacy of not who we are but, through us, who Jesus is. We want someone else to follow in our footsteps after we leave this earth. As Jesus speaks these words in today's passage, He's the suffering servant ready to face the cross. Read verse 28. God the Father is pleased with the investment His son is going to make for the salvation of the world. The people of Jerusalem that day heard the voice of God—some thought it was thunder or an angel. Now read 30-32—Jesus is speaking to the whole crowd. His feet will be lifted off the ground of the earth by the old rugged cross; the hour is now. Through the cross forgiveness is going to be won, and Satan is going to be defeated. Read verse 36. The light of God is here among you; now is the time to come to Me. Now is the time to profess Me as Lord and God and Savior.

If you don't Jesus as your Savior, He invites you to come through this last verse. He is the Light of the World. I'm not asking you if you come to church, if you're good, if you know your Bible. I'm asking do you have a saving, faithful relationship with Jesus Christ. If you do not, it is my joy to tell you He Himself invites you to come to Him. The cross has taken place; He has been glorified. It is His joy today to offer you salvation. When He died on that cross, your name was on His heart. He knew you would need this invitation that you're hearing through His word this day. You can come to Him and say "Lord, I believe on You, I believe what You did on the cross, I believe what You did at the empty tomb. I want to be Your son or daughter. I want Your honor and glory forever as I stay by Your side." The good news is He will receive you in a true relationship of faith. This is not my promise; I don't have the authority to say that. It's His promise based on the authority of the cross. He invites you this moment—He doesn't ask you to wait, get your sin in check, become a Bible scholar. He was hated by the world so you can know the love of God. If you need Him, come today! Don't wait!

If you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, today's passage should change your entire outlook on life. The church is not built that you and I might be comfortable. He created the church that it would take us from this place as His people into the world of lost people so they can come to Him through our witness. That's the life of sacrifice and giving—laying aside what I want to do so I can be who Jesus wants me to be and how I am to serve Him and invest and plant my life so He can produce something fruitful through me and from me. The church directs us to look beyond our needs and see the needs of a world hurting, lost, and hell-bound. We are to feed the hungry, support the missionary, reach the fatherless, help the hurting, reach those "different" from us. When we see a need, act on it. When we see someone lost, take Jesus to them. If we, the church, only look out for our comfort we have fallen into grave sin. If we only look at taking care of ourselves, we've fallen away from the Word of God and His commission upon our lives to model Him. The church was not created for comfort; it was created for commitment. Who of us will commit our lives to take Jesus into the world this week?

Let Us Pray: Father God, these words are a tremendous challenge and yet Lord, we thank You for the model of what true life should be invested in the Kingdom of God. You said "my hour has come." Today, is our hour of worship where we come and say "Lord, we're committed to serve the Jesus who gave His life that we might be saved." Take us into the world; show us the opportunities and appointments we have this week to share the love of Christ. Bless this church, I pray, Father. Help us not to simply look at ourselves; help us to look outside of ourselves to the glory of Jesus Christ. Bless that one who needs you. Bless us as we worship together and commit our lives to you. In Jesus' name. Amen.