



Easter 2021 – Part 1
Christ's Triumphal Entry: The World's Only Hope
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On this week before Easter, we often think about this series of events that took place that we call the Triumphal Entry, the Palm Sunday. A bit of a parade where Jesus is brought in Jerusalem and they waved palm branches, laid down their clothing and their cloaks and they cried out, Hosanna. We sang about it this morning. And while we often focus this time of year on Easter and Good Friday and it's super important that people understand what that's all about, we often don't think that it's all that important that we understand what Palm Sunday is about. I mean, what is there to understand? I mean, people are crying out Hosanna. They're worshipping Jesus as king. He's presenting himself as king. What's there to miss about that?

Well, let me suggest this morning that I think that if we don't rightly understand what took place on Palm Sunday, you will have a greater effect on your life, a negative effect on your life, if you misunderstand this than you might imagine. There's a lot at stake in viewing this properly, aligning our minds biblically about what's taking place here on the weekend before the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. So I invite you to turn to John Chapter 12 and to think with me biblically through this, because I think there are two primary ways to understand Palm Sunday and in John Chapter 12 is the passage I'd like you to look at, all four gospel writers cover this in much more detail in the other gospels. But since I'm preaching, Lord willing, next weekend on John Chapter 12 in our Easter message, I thought it'd be good for us to look at the coverage that God gives us through the Gospel of John in John Chapter 12 on the Triumphal Entry.

Now, two ways that Christians normally view this, and the first is that Christians say, well, this is a time to join in with the crowd and to say Hosanna, which is "save us." And of course, Christ came to save us. He died in our place. He took on the penalty of our sin. He rose from the dead as a verification of that. And we are thankful that he came to deliver us from our sins. We can rightly worship him as Lord, as king. We want to make sure he's the king of our church and we will make sure he is the lord of our lives and all those around us. I mean, Lord willing, our family is participating in that worship. That's an awesome thing. We can celebrate that.

When preachers or commentaries or some kind of, you know, smarty pants Christian comes along and says, "Well, you know, those people who were yelling Hosanna, they wanted, you know, they wanted political freedom. They wanted freedom from the heavy hand of Rome and the high taxation. And I mean, they couldn't even have their Supreme Court drool on something without the government looking over their shoulder and Herod getting involved. I think, of course, you know, about Pilate's involvement and, you know, people appealing to Caesar. I mean, this was not ideal for Israel to think about their independence and all that God had promised that they would be. So these people we need to kind of dismiss in the typical view of Palm Sunday that they were more earthly-minded than they were spiritually-minded. They cared more about high taxation than they did about the state of their soul. And so, you know, we're aligning things properly by understanding that Christ came to save our



soul from sin and prepare us for heaven and all those kinds of things. So we celebrate that on Palm Sunday. And that is pretty much where most Christians settle in in their thinking of Palm Sunday.

Well, I want to suggest that that is an inadequate view of what's taking place here in John 12, starting in verse 12. This is a much different fulfillment of what God is doing in his redemptive plan, and I think if you don't rightly view it this way, I think we stop short of a lot of what God would have us understand about this. So let's read it and then let's try and unpack a little bit after some simple observations, what we need to think about this, which I think will perhaps change and enrich and perhaps benefit your life in more practical ways than you might imagine.

So let me read it for you. I'm reading from the English Standard Version. I'd love for you to follow along beginning in verse 12 when it says, "The next day the large crowd had come to the feast." Now, this was one of the festivals that they were required in the Old Testament to come to Jerusalem as a pilgrimage. Well, if you lived within a reasonable distance and the Bible did make exceptions for different people who couldn't afford or couldn't come. But if you were, you know, a person who could do this, you were required to come to Jerusalem for a few of the feasts, three of them in particular. And the one that was coming in the next week was Passover. Passover was very important of course. Christ had synchronized his own death with the slaughtering of the lamb at Passover, it is going to happen on Friday and all of that was going to take place.

So people were coming and the population of Jerusalem would swell during this period of time every year along with the other feasts, but this one in particular at Passover. So they're coming, large crowds. They write all this worship music, the Psalms you might read in the Psalms, these titles that talk about the Psalms of Ascent, they're climbing up the elevation to Jerusalem. This was an important part of their lives, their spiritual lives. "And they heard that Jesus," it says bottom of verse 12, "was coming to Jerusalem. So they took palm branches." And we'll see why in a minute at the bottom of the passage. But they knew he was something, right? And some of them were convinced he was all that, he was much, he was great, he was the king they thought.

They say, they took palm branches, branches of the palm trees, and they went out to meet him and they were crying out here, Hosanna! There's the word we sang this morning and it comes from Psalm 118. And they're saying, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel." So they're saying, we think this is the king. So, Christ, now, as we learn in the other gospels, he arranges all this with the apostles going to get this young donkey, but it says "Jesus found a young donkey and he sat on it just as it is written." Now, John is careful to point out this is the fulfillment of Zechariah Chapter 9 verse 9 when it says fear not, "Daughter of Zion! Behold your king is coming sitting on a donkey's colt." There's more to that passage and even more on how it's elaborated on in the other gospels. But John makes the point, he's fulfilling this biblical prophecy in Zechariah Chapter 9.

Verse 16, "His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remember that these things had been written about him and had been done to him." Now here's the explanation for the crowd, verse 17. "The crowd that had been with him," we saw that in verse 12, here it is in verse 17, "when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, they continued to bear witness." They continue to say, "Hey, this is the one who popped Lazarus out of the grave," and that was an amazing thing. And I mean, Lazarus is a celebrity at this point, by the way, so much so, much to his own personal threat, the Pharisees wanted to kill him, it says previously in this text. So everyone's talking about this, as you would too, if someone in your town had been dead for three days and here comes this traveling rabbi who's doing miracles in other towns comes to your town and raises this man from the dead.

"The reason why the crowd went to meet him," now, that ties verse 12 with verse 18 now, the reason everyone was interested as they're going up for the festival, The Feast of Passover, was that they had "heard that he'd done this sign." I mean, he comes from Bethany, he just had dinner again with Mary and Martha and Lazarus and he's coming into town and everyone wants to see him because everyone is talking about him, because everyone who saw it, everyone who knew that Lazarus was dead and went to his funeral and now knew that he was alive, everyone's talking about Christ, everyone's pointing their attention to this person.

The Pharisees, they were frustrated, right? That the consternation of the Pharisees was they were trying to put this man down. They want him to get no one's attention and they say, verse 19, "You see that we're gaining nothing." We're trying and futilely trying to get people to turn their attention away from Jesus. But, "Look, the world has gone after him," a bit of hyperbole here, but it seems like everyone that we know is interested in this person, Jesus. And we want to have no one pay attention to Jesus because we think he's not anyone. We think he's a blasphemer. Actually, as the gospel writers reveal, they're actually jealous with how popular he's becoming and we just don't like all this. You got to fit within the system here and the system is you're not a part of the pharisaical band. You're not even a scribe or teacher of the law. So we reject you. But the crowds, they're all turning their attention to Jesus.

If you see on the outline here, if you've got a downloaded outline or a printed one, you'll see verse 12, I've tied together with verses 17 through 19, even as I read it, these all go together to help us understand why there's such a buzz about Christ and why everyone is so interested in seeing Christ. And one word I'd like you to look at is in verse 18 there. It's the word that's become synonymous, if you've read the Bible a lot, with the word miracle, it's the word "sign." Jesus does miracles. Sometimes they're called signs and wonders. It's a wonder because it dropped your jaw, you think, how can that happen? You've just suspended natural law. You've broken the laws of nature. And it's a sign because it's pointing to something, in this case it's pointing to a person. And Christ is doing these signs and wonders, and he's doing these miracles because he's pointing the attention to himself. Or more specifically, as Jesus confessed in the gospel of John, "the Father is pointing his attention to me."

And I just want to make a very simple observation as we get started. And I'd like you to write it down this way. As you think about verses 12, 17 through 19, I want you to think about the fact



that God is always pointing our attention to Christ. Number one, "Realize God Is Always Pointing Your Attention to Christ." He has been throughout Church history. He has been throughout the New Testament. He certainly has been throughout the Old Testament as everyone looked and researched and inquired with curiosity about when the coming of this person would come. And that is what God has been doing. And I would say even in your life, if you sit here today, God is continuing to point your attention to this person. It's the central feature of God's redemptive work. It's the person that God is trying to get everyone to look at. This is no mistake that everyone wants to see Jesus. If God didn't want everyone to give an interest in Jesus, he wouldn't have done all that he did. He certainly wouldn't be coming into the town here on the festival when the population of Jerusalem was the biggest and we wouldn't be having signs done by him. I mean, there's no need, there are plenty of people dying in Jerusalem in the first century. But all of this is taking place so that people would look at Christ.

Then Christ would say to his disciples, well, who are people saying that I am? "Who do people say that I am?" They replied, "Man, everyone is talking about you. Some think you're a great rabbi. Some think you might even be Elijah, you know, risen from the dead. Some think you're a prophet, a great prophet doing miracles." And then he's very interested in asking the question, "Well, who do you say that I am?" And that's really the question that everything is moving toward. And I say everything because it's not just God himself and the Spirit who he dispatches into the world to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. It's really everything in nature. And I say that advisedly in Romans Chapter 1, it says everything in nature itself is pushing us to see the deficiency in our humanity, the perfection of God and the bridge between those two, his redemptive work in his Son. Everything is pointing to the person and work of Christ.

Creation does. And then he speaks in Romans Chapter 2 about conscience. Conscience does. And he's always trying to get us to see the fact that even within the human heart, we have this tendency to continue to feel the pressure of God's written word, which of course, is a third thing you could add to this pile of pointing people even after the time of the biological life of Christ in his coming here in Galilee and Jerusalem. You can say he's constantly pushing people toward considering Christ. Who is he, to get you to say at some point, who do you say that Christ is? The attention is always moving toward Christ.

The problem is in Romans Chapter 3, I've gone from Chapters 1, 2 and 3. Chapter 3 says, here's the problem. Without God doing this, you would have no interest in Christ. No one seeks after Christ. There's nobody who's just innately wanting to say, well, I want to figure out who the king of the universe is, and I want to bow down and cry out that he is the great king and the Lord. No one. No one does that naturally. You don't have that penchant, that desire. That is not how you're built. Matter of fact, it goes on to say everyone's turned to their own way. And that's the picture of the sheep that are always scattering. And yet Jesus comes on the scene and says, yeah, but there are people I'm calling out to. Right? The sheep are going to hear my voice, "my sheep are going to hear my voice, and they're going to follow me." And that is the process of everything that's ever happened from the beginning of time.



Matter of fact, in the Garden, God says to Adam and Eve, I've got a redemptive plan. We get this really quick view of the fact that this tempter that has taken you away from me, I've got a bridge now between sinful human beings that you've now become and who I am. There's going to be one who comes and crushes the head of the enemy. There is a solution and everything in creation and conscience and Scripture and I would say in the providence of how your life has even been arranged, God is trying to point you to his Son.

And that is I think it should go without objection, because here we are 2,000 years later, I'm in a room full of people on the other side of the planet and we're still talking about this. And you can go all throughout even pagan Southern California and see churches everywhere this morning, they're meeting talking about Jesus. I mean, some may be doing it, you know, partially or inaccurately or for their own purposes. They may be doing it for their personal gain. But as Paul said, I'm happy, I'm excited, I revel in the fact that Christ is preached because that's what God is doing throughout the world. That's why Christianity is the biggest religion in terms of adherents around the world. It's the number one best-selling book, the Bible, that speaks of Christ, both Old Testament, looking forward to him, New Testament explaining who he is. I mean, it's the first book that popped off of things like the printing press when we made it, in broadcasting. I mean everything is providentially pointing the masses of the world to Christ.

Now, your neighbor might say, as they try to push that back, "I don't want to hear about that." They start talking about what about the man out in the jungle somewhere who has never heard of him. But to obfuscate and to try and elude the pressure of the Father drawing people to himself, they'll say those kinds of things. But you look around the world, you look up through history, you look at all the things happening even in our modern society, Christ is an issue that everyone needs to contend with. And the Bible says God is actively going out and drawing people to himself.

I mean, when he's lifted up later in this passage, you're in John 12, you can look down at the bottom, when he dies on the cross, this interesting thing that takes place, verse 32, the middle of this conversation here, in the middle of this paragraph, "And I when I'm lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself." There are pictures of crosses all over the world. There are pictures of even Jesus hanging on a cross all over the world. And his death, "He said this to show what kind of death he was going to die," he's going to be lifted up. That's what it said in John 3, remember that? Like that snake on a pole we ended with our study last week. And so Christ is going to be crucified and lifted it up. And lifted up not only physically on a Roman execution rack, but he was going to be lifted up in terms of his fame and his attention and all that was going to happen. They were kind of stymied by that. Like how in the world is that going to take place? He's going to die. Verse 34, they said, "We heard from the Law that Christ is to remain forever." He's immortal. "How can you say that the Son of Man is going to, be executed, "lifted up," on a Roman execution rack?

And he goes on to talk, "Who is the Son of Man?" Jesus says, "Well, the light is among you for a little bit longer. Walk in the light while you have the light, lest the darkness overtakes you." Each individual can make that decision about how they're going to respond to the light.



They might be like someone you're waking up in the middle of the night who says, "No, I don't want to see it," but the point is the light is going out. And the Bible says that even Christians are continuing, for now 2,000 years, to be the light that points people's attention to Christ. And so God in this world, through creation, through conscience, through Christians, through Scripture, is pointing people to Christ. And they've got to deal with that. They've got to somehow adjudicate and figure out what they're going to do about it.

Now, a lot of people can fight it and we all have a story about that. Matter of fact, in the small groups and the small group discussion questions that are published on our website, we want you to get in your small groups and talk about that. How was the process for you between learning about Christ and coming to a place of full repentance and surrender to Christ? I use that because in Luke Chapter 14, there's that sense in which I'm overwhelmed at some point and I just want to stop fighting. The apostle Paul has the story about his conversion. He says that when Christ finally gets a hold of him, Christ has to say it's really hard for you, wasn't it, to kick against the goads. I keep pushing you in the direction of submission to the lordship of Christ and you keep fighting it.

And some of you here today, just to step out of this text for a second and to say something bold and authoritative and hortatory to you, if you know that word, to be strong and telling you there are some of you here right now who are not yet there, who God is pursuing and God is drawing you and you're perhaps fighting that. And you know that there is that sense in which every time you turn around, it is that sense of Christ, the accurate picture of who Christ is, and you can either deny it and try and fight it, you can, as it says in Romans 1, suppress that truth by continuing to go headlong into unrighteousness, or you can start to say, as Luke 14 says, as Hebrews Chapter 2 and Hebrews Chapter 3 says, you can stop being rebellious against that. Right? And I quote those passages in Hebrew because it says, "Today, if you'd hear his voice, don't harden your heart." Stop resisting this.

Now, I'm not saying to take a blind leap into nonsensical, illogical living. I'm saying if you don't understand how the Christian worldview and Christ himself makes cogent, coherent sense, well, then there may be more study to do. But I am telling you, the Christ that you date the calendar after, Christ is the center of all things, you need to at some point stop fighting this and you need to say, "OK, I surrender." Christ certainly is calling people like he called Saul of Tarsus to say, "Stop fighting me. You're kicking against my prompting. You're fighting my voice. Don't harden your heart, stop fighting." And I would say to some of you, it's time for you to become Christians here this morning, because you've heard a lot about it. You've studied some about it. You know the message. You know that this is an inescapable thing.

I think about Bunyan in his book, "Grace Abounding," he talks about his testimony. He said, "I was walking by two ladies who were standing by a doorway talking about Christ." And he said, "and when I left that conversation went with me." And some of you know, it's a sermon, it's a discussion. It's something you've read in the Bible. It's a book you've read about the Bible that has haunted you because God keeps working on you. And I'm just telling you, it's time to get to a place of decision. It's like that passage in Luke 14 when you know that the king's got 20,000 men and you got 10,000 men, at some point you've just got to drop to your



knees and you've got to interlace your fingers behind your head and say, "I'm going to stop fighting this. I repent, I'm going to become a Christian." I mean, that is so essential for some of you to stop this fight. And I would plead with you that today, if you'd hear his voice, you wouldn't harden your heart. You'd recognize what an important thing this is that you don't continue to resist.

I know that we don't seek him on our own, but we're not like zombies, just, you know, going toward God in some mechanical, robotic way. It's the constant daily decisions you make about how you're going to respond to that. I was talking about John Bunyan, I should say it led him to a Christian book. The thing that John Bunyan actually got to reading was Martin Luther's commentary on the book of Galatians. And he said something about that. Did I write it down? I don't know that I wrote it down. Yeah, he said, yeah, here it is, "Luther's commentary on Galatians was the best of all books for a wounded conscience." And I thought all of us have a book like that, I suppose, at least I do, that I think was the best book of all for someone who is struggling and running from God and being drawn by God and fighting it. I mean, we read certain things and they become pivotal for us, or you hear a certain sermon and it becomes pivotal for us. You're in a conversation and it becomes a pivotal conversation. And those are the things that you have to thank as God continues to pursue you.

If there's more to study, there's more to study, but don't use studying or information or, you know, some intellectual question you have about Christianity or theism be the thing that becomes an excuse. If it's necessary, then let's discuss it and let's pursue it. But don't harden your hearts.

All right. Well, that's a simple observation, but what's the real distinction you're talking about? One way to view Palm Sunday, another way to view Palm Sunday. Well, one way I've just talked about that I think most evangelical Christians think of it that way. But what are you talking about there's a different way? Here's the other way. Let's go back to our passage here in John Chapter 12, start in verse 13 and see what they were doing. They were taking palm branches and they were waving them all and they were crying out the words of Psalm 118, Hosanna, "save us." "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel." Right? Who's the king at this point? Caesar out in Rome. Basically, this is a territory that he's governing and he sends people to govern. And some people like Herod come and become the king of the region and the people are not in charge. So they're saying maybe this is the king. Right? They're there seeing that he's able to raise people from the dead. They know something of the Old Testament. Matter of fact, I would argue they know a lot about the Old Testament and they're including statements about the fact that there is a king who is coming.

I mean, it wasn't since Zedekiah 500 years ago that we had a physical king sitting on a physical throne in Israel. We've been without a king for a long time, but there's a king who is coming. Matter of fact, he's called the Christ. The Christ means he was anointed and set apart. They poured oil over the head of a person to set them apart to the office that they served. And Christ was going to be one, much like the priests were anointed and the prophets were anointed and the kings were anointed, there would be someone who would fulfill all of



those, and he'd be called the Christ, the anointed one, the one who is set apart from all others to fulfill this office, three offices in one. And they're thinking, I think we've got the king of Israel. "And they found this young donkey and he sat on it just as it is written," and now all of a sudden, we're talking about a prophetic statement from Zechariah 9.

So I'd like us to turn there and I'd like us to see what they were thinking as they started to consider the kingship of some new king who would come by God's hand to rule. Now, it sounds like a hard book to find, but it's not. Go to Matthew and turn left two doors down to Zechariah, Zechariah Chapter 9, and I want to remind you of what they were anticipating. Let's look at the promise itself. I think it's more than just the disciples waking up to this later after he was glorified. I think some people there who were shouting about the king thought about this. They thought about their king who was coming and he would come on a donkey and some people probably connected that. Maybe even some children there connected that.

Zechariah Chapter 9 verse 9. "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion." Daughter of Zion. The people, the populace of Zion. Zion is the idealized word for Jerusalem. So a population of Jerusalem, even though you may be from other places and villages and towns, you're coming here. Hey, you would shout aloud, a lot of shouting going on. Matter of fact, the Pharisees are telling them to stop shouting so much as they're all praising God because they think their king is coming. So "shout aloud," that's what the Bible says, "O, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; he's righteous and he's having salvation and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, on the foal of a donkey."

Now look at this. "I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim." By the way, when the population swelled in Jerusalem for the Passover, guess what they did like they do at any event here, when you have a lot of people. You get this whole surrounding frame around the picture of the authorities. Who are the authorities? Well, you had the temple guards when you get up to the Temple Mount who are Jewish, but you had the Roman authorities, you had them pulled up in their chariots. You had them there with their, you know, their black and white SUVs. You had them there with their guns on their hips. You had them in greaves and in breastplates and with helmets on and with spears and with swords. They had horses because the Romans were keeping a tight eye on the millions, literally millions of people who would come to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover.

And here's the promise. You know anything about the promise of the one who's going to come as the king on a donkey, "I'm going to cut off the chariots from Ephraim and the warhorses from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to..." Israel, no, "peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea." Wow. That's a big picture there. "And from the River, talking about the Tigris and Euphrates River, way out in the east, all the way "to the ends of the earth," as far as you can think, past the Straits of Gibraltar. All the way past the end of the Mediterranean, you've got this king who is going to rule over everything.

Now you're thinking, "Oh, there they go again. They care more about lower taxes than they do about the state of their soul." Well, if you're going to claim that that's the case for the crowds



on the road into Jerusalem who are shouting, Hosanna, you're going to have to say the same thing about the angel who was dispatched to tell us about the birth of Christ. Because when Mary was told about the birth of her son, she was reminded of Isaiah Chapter 9 that said that there was going to be a child born to us, a son that was supposed to be given, and the government after we talk about his name. You know, the passage, you're going to be "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." You've got this great God with these great appellations, which are deity, right? Appellations and titles of deity. And here's this one who comes, this child who is going to be born among us, and it says "and the government is going to rest on his shoulders." And of the extent an "Increase of his government there will be no end."

Now, you can't read that and you can't hear that and think that my son isn't going to be a king. Matter of fact, that's what Mary was told. Your son is going to sit on the throne of his father, David, and he's going to rule. What kind of king is going to rule in the prophetic plan of God? One who is cutting off the chariots and the war horses from the north and the south of Israel and everything is copasetic, not just in the "Holy Land," but "from sea to sea, from river to the ends of the earth." This one's going to rule forever everywhere.

You're in Zechariah Chapter 9. Turn to Zechariah Chapter 14. Here is the promise of what the Bible had said and everyone should expect it. I'm just trying to salvage these people who get tossed under the bus every Good Friday when we're focusing on forgiveness of sins and salvation and those guys are worried about earthly things and we're really worried about spiritual things and so these guys are fleshly and we're spiritual. I want to save us from that. Because their expectation was 100% biblical.

Zechariah 14, drop down to verse 9, again, verse 9. Zechariah 14, "And the Lord," so we know this is not just some human being, "he will be king over all the earth. And on that day the Lord will be one and his name will be one," which is an interesting statement, which really only makes full sense when we understand the Trinity. But the idea here is you've got this picture of God with all authority, Son of Man, Daniel 7, reigning and ruling, "And the whole land shall be turned into a plain," it's going to be flat, "from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. But Jerusalem shall remain aloft," it's going to be a mountain, "on the site of the Gate of Benjamin to the place of the former gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's winepresses. It shall be inhabited," this great city, "and there shall never again be a decree of utter destruction. Jerusalem shall dwell in security."

Now, that's the picture and the picture is Jerusalem is going to be the center of the world and God himself is going to reign there. It will be his messiah. The Lord is going to provide a perfect king, the son of David he's going to be called and he will be the Son of Man with all authority. Perfect, righteous he is. And he is going to come and rule over everything. Now, that expectation is 100% accurate. It is what they expected. I don't want you to think, well, what we should do on Palm Sunday and the Triumphal Entry is to thank God for him solving our spiritual problems. You need to really get into the mode and mindset of those who are on that Palm Sunday road.



You need to, number two on your outline, You need to "Know Christ Is the Solution to Every Problem," every problem. I mean that -- every problem, including who's in charge, including geopolitical issues, including how much taxes we pay, including who's going to govern our region, our province, our state in our case. Right? Including crime, everything. As a matter of fact, everything that Christ came to do was to solve all the problems that you bifurcate between church and your talk shows and your news programs. You look at those things and go, "Oh, look how terrible everything is." Christ came to solve those problems. And everyone on Palm Sunday road who's waving their palm branches and saying, "Here he is, the king," they're only reciting the biblical expectation.

Because if you're going to throw them under the bus, you going to have to throw the angel under the bus and you also have to throw John the Baptist under the bus because John the Baptist got it. Matter of fact, he got it so well that he was confused about what was happening. You remember that story when he sends two of his disciples to Jesus and he says, "Hey, can you ask Jesus if he's the one or if we should look for another?" Here's how he said it literally, "Are you the one who is to come or should we look for another?" The one that is to come? What are you talking about? I'm talking about the Messiah, the king. Because John the Baptist was steeped in prophetic prophecies of the Old Testament. I mean, he knew it well.

He wasn't like this crowd going, "Well, we just want a better economic situation. We wish we had lower taxes and didn't have to pay the drachma tax, and we didn't have Herod kind of decorating the temple the way he wanted. We want it done right. And we want our social and economic and our civil government changed. And we want Christ to solve it. And you think about John the Baptist, right? He didn't care. He didn't care what he looked like. He was wearing funny clothes, eating grasshoppers, you know, weird stuff was going on in this guy and all he cared about was God. And yet when Christ was going about his ministry after saying, "Hey, here's the one, the lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world, I'm not even worthy to untie his sandals." When he was saying that stuff it didn't take very long, just a few months later, he's going, "Can you ask him if he's the guy? Is he the Christ or should we start looking for someone else?"

Now, if you know anything about the context of that, he's been locked up in prison in the Transjordan and he's over there in a prison and his freedom is gone. Well, who was he? He's a forerunner of Christ telling everyone, "Make straight the way of the Lord because the Lord is coming." All these passages are coming together in his mind. He gets it. He gets, you know, Malachi Chapter 3, Malachi Chapter 4, Isaiah Chapter 40. He knows the role that he's playing and he's going "It isn't working out." Why? "Because I'm in jail." You do know how it ends for John the Baptist in jail? He loses his head. Right? He gets decapitated in prison because of the stupid thing that was going on at a drinking party, as all that was happening as Herod Antipas, you know, got... you know the story. He says, "If this is the king and he's supposed to make everything right, things are not going right. I don't like it."

Don't think you're more spiritual than John the Baptist, don't think you have your act together better than the angel who came and announced the birth of Christ to Mary and don't start thinking, "Hey, I'm glad I can say Hosanna and know what it means to be saved. And it really



means this little area of my life that I think about at church. And it doesn't mean everything else out here." It does. I mean, it really, really does.

Matter of fact, look at the bottom, if you're still in Zechariah 14. The effect of the coming of the Messiah it's so systemic. It's so infiltrating everything that he says, "On that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses," every little part, "holy to the Lord." Set apart for God. "And the pots in the house of the Lord shall be as the bowls before the altar. And every pot in Jerusalem," every pot, everything you reach for to scramble some eggs, "and in Judah will be holy to the Lord of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the meat of the sacrifice in them. And there shall no longer be any trader in the house of the Lord of hosts on that day." Jesus driving out the money changers... It's going to be so good. It's going to be so fixed, like that little Qumran community out there in the desert of Judea that had given up on the temple because it was so corrupt. I mean, all of the people, like John the Baptist, are saying this is messed up. Yep. Well, one day when the Messiah comes, everything going to be fixed. Well, it wasn't looking like it was getting fixed. But this group of people thought, man, he's raising people from the dead, maybe this is it, this is it.

One day, according to the promise of the Bible, the Messiah will affect earth so much that when there's a news conference or there's a statement coming from the governor's mansion or from Sacramento, it will be with quotations of Scripture. It'll be about, you know, how I'm responding to the virtue of Christ and how the importance of adhering to the principles of God's truth is all going to be a part of how our leaders speak. That's the transformation that Christ came to bring. And he says he's going to bring it. The problem is it wasn't happening and John the Baptist is saying "What's going on?" And people today say it's not happening. Therefore, I guess we just segment our hope into this little circle within the pews of our church. Now, if you know your theology you might be saying, man, he's become a theologian or reconstructionist or maybe at least post-millennial, this guy has got a different theology this morning.

Listen, here's what I'm saying. There is, I hope you've heard me preach on this before, there is a distance in the fulfillment, a phasing of the fulfillment of God's promise. Is Christ the answer to every problem? Yes. Has he solved every problem? No. How many problems did he solve in his first coming? All the critically important spiritual issues of our life have been settled. Matter of fact, he's purchased the authority to take his power, and he has up to the right hand of the Father, and he will take that power it says in the book of Revelation and at a second coming he will begin to reign. And then everything will be established to where even the pots in everyone's cupboards will be set apart to be in line with the truth of the holiness and the greatness of God. That's coming and Christ will be the king.

But right now we're between these two. It's like when my kids were little and, you know, growing up here in Southern California, they had, you know, a handful of trips to Disneyland and they kept hearing about the real Disneyland. Right? The real one that has a big main street and a really big castle and everything's better and cleaner and has got more stuff and more rides. And so, of course, you know, mom and dad leveraged by that, we got to have the real thing, you know, we saved for 35 years to go to Orlando. We said, "OK, we're going to go



and we're going to take our kids there." And so we plan a trip and we say, "OK, we're going to go." And, you know, it's like the people who record it now on YouTube, we tell our kids "we're going to the Magic Kingdom" and it's like, "Oh, this is going to be crazy. Great. I've heard so much about it and it's going to be awesome.

Well you take these kids and you say, "OK, now today's the day we're going." Well, here's the problem. It's a long way away. As a matter of fact, you got to fly to get from here to there. It's on the whole other coast. So we actually, because dad's trying to save money, because all the money is going to go into Mickey Mouse's wallet. And so I'm trying to save money so I don't fly out of Orange County. That'll be more expensive. I fly out of San Diego County. I take my kids throw them in the back of the van and we go to San Diego. And, you know, by the time we're getting to San Diego, they think, well, surely we're here now. Right? And the kids say, "Are we there yet?" "No, we're not there." We haven't started. You got to park the car. You got to go through all the rigmarole, get on the shuttle. All that junk. And then you get to the terminal, you got to get checked through there. Then you get to the place where you're going to go and board the plane. And it's not even eight o'clock in the morning yet, and I'm exhausted, I want to go home.

Our kids are just thinking, "Oh, when is this going to happen?" Well, then there's the plane and then of course, Dad's trying to save money, so we got a layover, probably two, I don't remember. And we're eating junk in the plane and kids are falling asleep and waking up sweaty and they've got to change their clothes. It's just a mess. And they were eating stale bunned cheeseburgers at McDonald's in the Dallas airport. And it's like we're not even halfway there yet.

And then you get there and you finally get to Orlando. Of course, Dad's trying to save money so, you know, I rent the cars that aren't even in the terminal of the airport. Right? You got to take the thing all the way out to who knows where. You're wondering where you're being taken and they get you to, you know, budget, budget, budget, rent a car. And so you got to get all your luggage. And of course, everybody packs too much stuff. And then you put everything in the corner and we're exhausted. It's eleven o'clock at night and we got all the luggage piled in a corner with Dad's trying to get through the line and everyone else was trying to save money. All the cheap people are there with me and there's only one person working the desk because they're trying to save money. And so it's a mess.

And I tell the kids, go over there and stand by the luggage and they're, you know, sitting up on piles of junk in the corner that we had packed from Orange County. And at that point, they might be thinking this is the biggest rip-off trip that my parents have ever tried to sell us on. The Magic Kingdom. As they say, we're hungry, we're hungry, and they're reaching into their pocket and they find an old pretzel that they got on the first leg of the flight from San Diego. And it's like, you know, I promised them, you know, dinner in the castle and, I didn't but it's an illustration, so let's just say I was, you know, prime rib in the castle in Orlando. It'll be awesome. Cotton candy for breakfast. It's going to be great. And they're sitting there starving in some dark-lit budget budget, budget Rent-A-Car in Orlando. And we haven't even made it to the hotel yet.



Where's all this promise of the kingdom? And that's where Pastor Dad has to say to his kids, quoting Acts 14, "through many tribulations, we must enter the Magic Kingdom." (audience laughs) This is going to take a long time. It's going to be hard. As a matter of fact, we're not even going to get to the amusement park. We're going to have to go to bed tonight in some strange place. And as they sit there lying in bed after I have to unpack all their junk and we're trying to get settled just so we can get ready for the next morning to go to the... If they're lying in bed trying to convince each other how great this trip is, I hope that I'm going to interject and say, "this isn't it." This isn't it. You've got to go to sleep now. We're going to wake up after we go to sleep and we're going to be there, but not now. Right?

There's a distance between the two. Did my promise not get fulfilled? No. What about all this pain? And you think, well, OK, well, that's because we're stuck with travel. Why would God separate these promises? Why would he come and deal with our spiritual problem and our relationship with him by settling this debt and then wait all this while until we finally have the kind of politics, the kind of civil society, the kind of peace where I can take swords and pound them metaphorically into plowshares, where we don't we don't need locks on our doors. We don't need a gun in the dresser. We don't need, you know, people that have standing armies to fight because it's going to be perfect. Why do we have to wait for that?

Well, that's because when it comes to God's kingdom, it's not about him and his children. Right? It's about him growing his family between San Diego and Orlando. It's about us trying to convince everybody on the plane, everyone in the terminal in San Diego that you need to go with us because guess what? Dad's got tickets for you. It has been paid for and we are going to get you... And it isn't just the four or five of us who are going to go. We want you to go. When we get to the terminal there at Dallas, we're going to say, "Hey, you are going to come with us to the kingdom, and then we're going to get to the Budget Rent-A-Car place and we're going to say, "Everybody standing in line, you need to come. We have all of the payments paid. Come and join us.".

And God is so interested in collecting this kingdom of people that can come into his kingdom that he keeps on delaying it. As a matter of fact, that's what it says in Second Peter Chapter 3, that the only reason the wait is there between the two comings is so that you and I can collect more people. That's why we're always taught about church growth. Don't frown and furl your brow at that. The whole point about planting churches and growing churches and having you invite people to Easter next weekend is so that we can see more and more people get their ticket to the kingdom to put it in blunt terms. And that's our job. And when the last person gets their ticket in hand and says, "Yes, I see that I need to be a follower of Christ," then guess what? The gates are going to open and we're going to walk into the kingdom and it's going to be real and tactile. It's going to involve real property. It's going to involve real houses. It's going to involve real leaders. Matter of fact, you, I hope, are going to be one of them. Think about that.

And let me say this, to really drive this into a whole another insane level in your thinking. There is a misunderstanding about the desires that we have. When you look at that crowd on



Palm Sunday and say "They were just focused on earthly things and fulfillment of their comfort and protection and stuff that they shouldn't have worried about." I want you to know that all the things that really we desire as human beings, they are built into our humanity. And I say not the objects to fulfill those desires, but the desires themselves.

The desire, for instance, for, I mean, think of the categories in Scripture. First John Chapter 2 talks about you've got the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life. And these are things that it says, "Watch out the world's going to offer you all kinds of things to satisfy those." And so we start thinking it's not the satisfying of those in these earthly means that are the problem, it's the categories themselves. And I would say you're totally wrong and not the case. Those people wanting lower taxes and freedom and security and safety and no war and no crime and no violence and the king sitting on the throne in Jerusalem were exactly on target. That's what I want. That's what you want.

And the things that we want, those are good things. As a matter of fact, Jesus says, hey, when it comes to things like the lust of the flesh, pleasure, God is not opposed to that. He's just opposed to you trying to cram in some solution to that that is not what God says is going to last and that God says... Matter of fact, he says, "At my right hand," Psalm 16, "there are pleasures forevermore." Do you think he's not trying to fulfill our pleasures? Of course he is. Of course he is. But if you're just trying to eat crumbs out between the seats on the airplane thinking that'll satisfy me, you're wrong. We're not there yet. He's got a feast waiting that will be great. And the satisfaction of our desires, our pleasures will be fulfilled.

The lust of the eyes, beauty, having things that satisfy. You think, "Well, it usually it takes a lot of money and, oh I know that, money, I shouldn't want that. Matter of fact, it says in First Timothy Chapter 6, "it's the root of all sorts of evil." Well, sure it is in this world, there are a lot of things that you can invest in that will be no good. Matter of fact, it will take your heart down a path to get things that don't really matter. But Jesus didn't say you shouldn't want stuff. Matter of fact, he just keeps trying to motivate us with stuff. He says, "as a matter of fact, if you're faithful, guess what? I will say to you, 'Enter into this kingdom and now I'm going to put you in charge of this many cities.'" You're going to have wealth there.

As a matter of fact, if you can just manage this wealth here on earth that's going to fail, I will then entrust you with true riches when we get there. Matter of fact, I want you to store more of it. Don't store it for yourselves treasure here. There's a lot of stuff out here that are going to take you off the path, but store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, which, by the way, is all going to come down to earth it says in Revelation Chapter 21. All that's coming. Of course, you should desire those things. You should have an ambition for those things. You say, "Well, not the boastful pride of life." Well, I understand the way that we put ourselves first here can often be that reflection of the original archetypal sin. Of course, you should not be a selfish, self-aggrandizing person.

But when Peter turns in Matthew 19, and he says, listen, that rich young ruler couldn't follow us because he wanted all that earthly accolades and all the power of his attorney's office, here's the thing, "We've left everything to follow you." Jesus didn't say, well, that's it, that's us.



We're going to be deprivation and we're going to be poor. No, he says, those of you that have followed me in this life, "you're going to sit on of thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." You're going to have riches. You're going to have power.

When the mom of James and John came to Jesus and said, I want one of my sons to sit on your right hand and the other on your left, and Jesus started talking about what it takes in terms of walking through this life from here to there to have that payoff. He didn't say no, there is none of that. He says it is given to the one to whom the Father has appointed it. I mean, there are people who are going to be greatly enriched and greatly exalted and they're going to have a reputation. You understand all of those desires, they're good. And everything they wanted on Palm Sunday road, as they said, "Hey, we think we got relief from Rome right now," those are good desires.

Your angst and frustration at the culture, at crime, at politics, at taxes. All of that is totally right. I mean, it is. How you go about fixing that may be wrong. And even the rants you have may not be appropriate and right. But I am telling you, the desire for those things is coming because Jesus came to solve all of those problems. And you need to look forward to that. If you don't, you have somehow segmented Christianity and you've kind of put it into this... You've sequestered it into a little corner and then you go around saying, "Isn't this trip great as you're lying there eating pretzel crumbs on a bag of luggage in a car rental kiosk?"

No, it's more than that now. Now are you with the Father? Yes. Do you have everything you need? Yes. Dad's there to walk you through all this. We have Christ in this life but this is not it. You hear it a lot from this platform. It's not the "here and now." It's about the "then and there." And we got to look forward to that with great anticipation and not limiting Christ to this little corner and then going out into the rest of our lives and figuring out how we can solve all these other things. Christ is the answer to all those other things. Can they all be implemented now? Of course they will not. As a matter of fact, Zechariah 14. I don't have time to look at it but if you just read the first eight verses, we read verse 9, it's going to mean the arrival of Christ and he's going to come with his recompense. He's going to come with setting the record straight. He's going to come with a war, it says in the book of Revelation and he's going to straighten all this out. But that's yet to come.

Leaving that explanation about Palm Sunday, you read that and you think, "Oh, I've read it, I know, great, they said Hosanna, I'm going to say Hosanna and praise God for what he's done, died on the cross, rose again, ascended on high. Yeah, it's great. We got Christ as our Lord. I figured that out." You know there's a lot more to every passage of Scripture than you're going to get at first blush.

As a matter of fact, it says in our passage, go back to it just real, real, real, real quickly, we'll end this. It says in John Chapter 12 verse 16, "His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him." Even the construction of that in the original language in which it was written puts this word, "these things" translated "these things" at the beginning of three different phrases. If you got your Greek New Testaments out or your



laptops, you can see that as you look at the construction. When it says "these things" his disciples didn't understand it at first. Right? But when Jesus was glorified these things they remembered and these things that were written about him and these things had been done to him.

I want you to think about that, they went through these things and they didn't get it, then they could come back and reflect on Scripture and they saw that these things were written about in Scripture. They were given sense in Scripture. And then they understood that this is what happened. Well, this is what happened. I don't get it. This is what happened. I do get it. What stands between that? The things that you start to understand in the Scripture. The Scripture is the key to understanding those things.

I was putting something together in the office this week, and the set of instructions were only in images. They're trying to save some money, I guess, and translating this from Chinese or something and so there were no words. I thought, OK, I can do this. What it was kind of tricky and it had like eight different steps to it and it was these line drawings of how to do it. I was like trying to act like I was smart and could figure it out, and I could not figure it out. I started saying, I wish I had some text to give us some meaning to this.

And this is what it's like kind of looking at how things happen, not only in history, not only in the narrative of Scripture, but we need those didactic propositional explanations, the text, that's going to explain it to us. Matter of fact, if you get instructions and you do it right, you'll see the text, you'll read it, then you'll look at the picture and you'll understand it. Sometimes you look at the picture first and then you look at the text and you look back at the picture and you get it and you know how it works.

Even in your life, let's personalize it, when it gets down to your life and God is working out everything according to the purpose of his will, the Bible is pretty clear that all of that is supposed to "work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose." We need the text of Scripture to help us understand that. Well, why does this happen? How does this happen? Even the suffering of life, I need to figure out, is it testing my faith? Just, why it's a broad category. But I can start to piece together things and go, "I get it now," and I can start to structure my thinking biblically through a grid, a lens, of Scripture, and we need that.

So let me just put it this way, number three, you and I, we need to "Become a Lifelong Student of Jesus Christ." You say, "So I thought you were talking about the Bible." The Bible is about Jesus Christ, the person and work and plan of Christ. Those things are all explained. Old Testament is all about him. New Testament is all about him. History has been all about him. History culminates in him. And so I need to understand him and everything the Bible says about him so I can look at my life and go, "OK, as a follower of Christ, a Christian, I need to figure out how my life works. I need to figure out how to understand time and space and art and music and politics and finances. How can I understand all of that?" Some of us are looking at the pictures, trying to make the best of it. But there's a text that you need to be studying every day that speaks of the person that is the answer to all of these things and



figuring them out. And we'll see that he will himself be the answer to every problem as his kingdom comes.

Speaking of becoming a lifelong student of Jesus Christ, it's important that we spend time in his word, and I know we say that all the time from this platform and we all nod, I read the Bible this morning, but we can go deeper. We can understand it, we can see the layers of it.

They had to take what happened to Jesus riding in on a donkey and presenting himself as king. And guess what? They started to figure out the distance between the suffering servant in his first coming and the reigning king in his second coming. Was he the king? Sure he was. Did he present himself as king? Yes. But there was a war that was coming and he kept talking about it. Jerusalem is going to be besieged. It's going to have ramparts and barricades and all that's going to happen. He kept saying that. Well, it can't be then the final picture of Isaiah. And it can't be the final picture of, I think about Amos and Joel and the statements that were made even there about the coming of the kingdom, it can't be what Zechariah 14 was about. It's not done yet. There's more to come. They figured that out with more and increasing study was where it clarifies our focus. Even as we saw this morning on the Palm Sunday road, a deficient view of that, a skewed view of that's going to mess everything up. Certainly it's going to make it less than it ought to be.

One morning this week, I decided on the way to work to drive through the car wash. Not the kind you get out of your car and sit around and have people do it for you, it's the kind you drive through, which doesn't do a very good job, particularly when you do it the day before it rains like I did this week. But I drive through. It only takes a couple of minutes. No one was in line. Yeah. Let's get a car wash. Need a car wash. So I go through the car wash and things are slapping and, you know, it's just, you know how it is. It's like, "Ah, it's so loud." You can't get the radio up loud enough to kind of drown it out. And like, I just want this to be over. I don't know. I sound weird, but it's crazy. It's like, how does my car even survive this storm of, like, sponges and spinning pieces of felt? It's weird.

Well it gets done, get through it and find my way to work here, and I got a parking space that I normally park in every day. I like to back into it and back into it every day. I try to back into my space and I'm starting to realize I'm not doing a very good job at it. I was really struggling. Matter of fact, I was going in and out and in and out. And I am not kidding, I literally looked up to the windows of the offices thinking, "I hope there none of the employees watching me try to back into the space." I finally put my left rear wheel up over the curb. I'm like... And so I didn't want to keep trying but it wasn't even straight at the end. I was like, I don't... OK, I'm done.

So I grab my briefcase. I get out of my car. It's kind of like a ping pong player that hits a bad shot who looks at the paddle, like it's the paddle's fault. I thought I'm going to go kind of look at the back of my car to see why everything was so wonky. And I just had a sense that something wasn't right. So I turn around, I go back to the back of my car and see I'm one now who backs up now completely dependent on that little screen in the front, because when you put it in reverse, I see everything through that screen. It's just nice. It's clear. And I don't know,



some of you don't trust that. I've learned to trust it. I look right at the screen. I look at it, back up, no problem. So I'm thinking maybe the camera's messed up. I don't know.

I go to the back and sure enough, that stinking car wash slapped the rear end of my car so hard that little camera popped out of the holder. I mean, there's not an aftermarket thing. This was like put in there by the Japanese, right? It was in there. And now it's dangling, hanging by a wire and it just cock-eyed and turn just a little bit. I was back there, I wanted to step out from behind my car to all the people in the windows going, "It's the car." It really was the paddle. It was not my driving skills. I took that thing and I put it right back up in there and heard it go click, snapped it in and go, OK. And I've been parking straight every day since then. You go check my car, man. It is perfectly parallel to those lines and I realize all it takes is twisting your vision just a little bit to be off.

I think if you don't think clearly about Scripture, sometimes every passage and narrative of Scripture, you start to put the rear wheel of your life over a curb. And we need to be just aligned. We need to rightly handle the word of truth. And sometimes it's looking at very familiar passages, like Palm Sunday, like Good Friday, like Easter. I got to make sure I understand that rightly. Study the Bible. The Bible is about Christ. Christ is the answer to everything, and he's calling you. If you're not a Christian, man, he's pulling you right now. And if you are Christian, he's pulling you back to his book so that you might know him better and rightly understand this world.

Let's pray. God, for those who are here, perhaps even struggling with where they stand with you. Another sermon, another sermon about Christ, another sermon about his promises and the prophecies. I pray that you might have some that just stop fighting today. Like the apostle Paul, maybe, they get knocked off their horse and say, I'm done fighting. I'm not going to kick against the goads anymore. And there'll be some that become Christians that turn from their life of separation and independence and sin and put their trust in Christ. They really trust that Christ is the answer and Christ is their king and they start living like it, even though in this world it's a mess. But trusting in the promise that the goal as we sit here and traverse this life with all of its tribulations, that we want to gain as many brothers and sisters in Christ and drag them with us into the kingdom.

So God help us because we're never going to have that passion, we're never even going to rightly understand your promises until we see your word clearly, till we get a clear picture of Christ in every passage of Scripture. So give us clarity about this and make us hungry to learn more this week about you and your Son.

In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.