

Your King has Come

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[0:00] Well, we're so used to crowds these days protesting on the streets. There is most weekends in Glasgow or the big cities in our land, a protest.

! And people come together and they march together. They chant together for their cause. Some carrying banners, others waving flags. People are either out in protest or they may be out to praise, to promote whatever cause that they are passionate about.

But it may not be a cause. It might be a person that people gather for. Like when U.S. President Donald Trump lands in Scotland for a visit, people are more likely to protest than they are to praise, as crowds make clear that they want to reject him rather than receive him.

Or just think of Ed Sheeran, the musician and singer in this past week. He has been a victim of the mob. His fans were praising him and now many of his fans are protesting against him.

Apparently, nearly half a million have unfollowed Ed Sheeran on Instagram. It's a real hassle when that happens. You do something and then half a million people stop following you on Instagram.

[1:12] Anyway, in today's reading from John chapter 12, the issue is how people respond to Jesus. People either praise him or they protest against him.

He is either received or he is rejected. People either acknowledge Jesus as their king or they harden their hearts against him. They respond with belief or with unbelief.

And that's the stage that we're at in the Gospel of John. We're about to enter the final week of the life of Jesus. And so the focus in John turns towards the death of Jesus.

And so in John chapter 12, we see Jesus being anointed in Bethany. He then enters Jerusalem to the praise of the crowds. They receive him as king, but not the king they expect.

Then the Greeks want to see him. The Jewish leaders want to kill him. And so the king has come. And the issue is how will people respond to him?

[2:17] Because Jesus forces people to make up their minds about him. And he still does today. We have got to decide whether Jesus Christ will be our king.

Will we respond in adoration or hard-heartedness? Will we respond with praise or in protest? Will we receive him or reject him?

Will we believe or will we respond in unbelief? And so let's see what kind of king Jesus is. Jesus is the worthy king.

He is the saving king. He is the glorified king. And he is the rejected king. So first, Jesus is the worthy king in verse 1 to 11. Verse 1 says, And so the Passover is coming.

Six days before suggests this was Saturday, which was the Jewish Sabbath. And then the Passover would be celebrated on the following Thursday. And then Jesus was crucified on the Friday.

[3:28] And then he rose to life again on the Sunday. And so John is telling us here that we are moving now into the final week of the life of Jesus. The countdown towards his death.

And Jesus is in Bethany and he's having a meal. Martha is serving. And then Mary came to anoint Jesus. Verse 3 says, Now, Mary's behavior here doesn't fit with social customs of the day.

It would have been completely inappropriate for a woman to come and do this for a man. And yet her extravagant action is, in fact, entirely appropriate.

Because Mary was anointing Jesus as king. Her perfume was expensive. It was exquisite. Not the kind of cheap perfume that you get from Boots or Superdrug.

No, this perfume was pure nard. Which was an aromatic oil that comes all the way from a plant grown in India. And in verse 5 we read it was worth 300 denarii.

[4:47] And that's a year's wages. So in our terms, this is probably around 30,000 pounds in value. So much expensive perfume.

And so either they were a wealthy family or perhaps this was a family heirloom. But like the expensive jewelry that often gets passed down through the generations. And so to pour such expensive perfume on Jesus' feet was beyond imagination.

Mary could not have been any more extravagant in her devotion to Jesus. She recognized that Jesus was worthy of all that she could give.

But Judas didn't see it this way. Verse 4, but one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was the bearer, who was later to betray him, objected. So John calls Judas out as the betrayer.

He objects to such a lavish use of expensive perfume. Verse 5, why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor?

[5:52] It was worth a year's wages. Now his response to Jesus is in sharp contrast to Mary's, isn't it? And so Jesus rebukes Judas in verse 7 and 8.

So Mary's not only displaying her love for Jesus by this act, her action was full of significance for what was going to happen to Jesus.

Because it was common back then to anoint a dead body. And so whether Mary was aware of this or not, she was preparing Jesus for his death and his burial.

Jesus himself knew he was about to go to Jerusalem to die on a cross. But before we see this playing out, we're going to get to it. Let's just pause and apply this to ourselves and reflect on what is our devotion for Jesus like?

He is a worthy king, so how do we respond to him? Because Mary's very public, lavish act expresses the devotion of her heart for Jesus, where Jesus is worthy of the very best that she could possibly give.

[7:04] And so pouring out this expensive perfume on Jesus' feet indicates the devotion of her life to Jesus. In a sense, she is entrusting her future to Jesus.

But just imagine that you're there around the table for that meal. What would you think if you were one of the guests at this dinner party? Well, from the outside, as you watch Mary, what she does is risky, it's reckless in so many ways.

And as you listen to Judas, what he says is safe and sensible in so many ways. That's the outside, but on the inside, it was Mary who knew how worthy Jesus was of such devotion.

Whereas Judas, he had a sinister motivation in his heart, which is where the challenge really comes for us. What about our devotion to Jesus?

Jesus is the worthy king, but how do we express our devotion to him? Put it another way, how lavish is our love for Jesus?

[8:16] Like, what does it cost us? An hour of our time on a Sunday, perhaps, as long as it doesn't clash with something else? A donation of money every now and again, but only if we don't need it for something else.

Because if our devotion to Jesus costs us very little, then it's an indication of how devoted we really are.

We probably love him very little. Or if we struggle to offer ourselves, so our time, our talents, our treasures, then how much do we actually trust Jesus, really trust Jesus?

Can we claim to truly love him if we hold back with what we have and can't really give? I was struck by John's throwaway comment in verse 3 when he says, And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

So this beautiful smell spread and lingered. And really it indicates the extent and the impact of Mary's devotion.

[9:25] And it's such a contrast to the stench of the tight, greedy, thieving heart of Judas. And so the question that challenges us is, what fragrance does our devotion to Jesus give off?

What impact does it make on the situation and the circumstances and the people around us? So that's the first thing. Jesus is the worthy king.

Second point is Jesus is the saving king in verse 12 to 19. And we see this in the way that Jesus heads towards Jerusalem. He goes as the long-promised Messiah, the saving king.

And despite the Jerusalem crowd's reaction, Jesus is not the king that the people were really expecting. Now it was normal for a king to be cheered by crowds as he rode triumphantly into a place.

And here the crowds do cheer. Verse 13, So they're celebrating that their king has come.

[10:31] The palm branches and the waving of them is a bit like waving flags today at a huge protest. And they're shouting in the words of Psalm 118, which is a royal song of thanksgiving for a victory.

And it was sung at the Jewish Passover, which is what the crowd are heading to Jerusalem for. And this word Hosanna is a Hebrew expression that means save. And so the people are celebrating the victory of this king.

Salvation belongs to the king. And the people sense Jesus is this king. And yet Jesus would save not in the way that they expected.

They were expecting a conquering king, a king of power and might. But as Jesus enters into Jerusalem, he's not going to take power and kill his enemies.

Instead, he is going to give up power and die for his enemies. And so Jesus wasn't following the usual script for a king. He was following God's script.

[11:39] That's why it's a war horse. It isn't a war horse. It's a young donkey that Jesus finds for his ride. Just imagine his majesty, the king, King Charles, ditching his armor-plated Bentley State limousine and going down the road in a tiny, cute Nissan Micra instead.

It doesn't exactly ooze with power and majesty, does it? And yet here is Jesus and he's riding on a donkey. Well, why? It's because he's fulfilling what is said in the Old Testament prophets.

Zechariah prophesied that the king would come riding on a donkey. That's how God would save his people. And Jesus is saying by his actions, I'm this king.

I've arrived. And yet his disciples didn't see this at the time. Verse 16. 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 and that these things had been done to him.

They hadn't grasped the full significance of this action of Jesus at the time. Only later did they understand the kind of saving king that Jesus was.

[12:59] He came not simply to save the nation, bringing deliverance from a political enemy. Rather, he came to save by bringing deliverance from our spiritual enemy, sin.

And so Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem is saying that he is the saving king who has come to bring salvation to the world. And it becomes clearer as the account continues.

But let's just pause because we shouldn't miss the implication of this for us. Because we will never understand Jesus or fully appreciate Jesus until we realize what kind of king Jesus is.

Jesus came to save us because we are in danger. But the way that Jesus saves is completely counter to what we'd expect. And his entry into Jerusalem indicates this for us.

This king came in weakness on a donkey. Not powerfully. On a war horse. And he would wear a crown of thorns.

[14:08] Not a crown of gold. Because he would be lifted up on a cross. Not on a throne. And all so that you and I could be saved from the punishment that we deserve for our sin.

And so first, Jesus is the worthy king. Second, Jesus is the saving king. And then third, Jesus is also the glorified king. Jesus says in verse 23, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

Just notice the context here. This announcement is prompted by some Greeks. In other words, non-Jews. And there's an irony because straight after the Pharisees say to one another in verse 19, See, this is getting us nowhere.

Look how the whole world has gone after him. As soon as they say that, the Greeks appear and they want to see Jesus. And so they go to Philip, one of Jesus' disciples who's got a Greek name. And who came from an area where Greek was spoken. And they've got one simple request. Sir, they said, we would like to see Jesus. And this is significant.

[15:23] Because throughout John's gospel, the Jews have struggled to see Jesus. Jesus has performed all of these signs that point to who he is. But they've struggled to see him for who he is.

And here these Greeks come along, Gentiles, non-Jews. They show up and they want to see Jesus. And Jesus' response is striking.

Verse 23, Jesus replied, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Now, if you've been following through John's gospel with us again and again, we've been told about the hour of Jesus. And all along, it's been the hour has not yet come. His time has not yet come. Where the hour or the time is the death of Jesus.

And now the Greeks want to see him. Jesus announces that the hour has come. The hour being the time for his death. And it's a sign that the nations are going to be gathered in by God's Messiah King.

[16:31] And it would happen through his death on the cross. That's where the Son of Man would be glorified. Because by calling himself the Son of Man, Jesus is referring to this great figure described in the Old Testament book of Daniel in chapter 7.

This figure, the Son of Man to whom God gives authority and glory and sovereign power over all peoples. And in Daniel, the Son of Man receives a kingdom that will never be destroyed. And here, this kingdom would come and it would happen through his death. And that's why Jesus uses this farming metaphor. Verse 24. Jesus himself is like this grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies.

Only by dying, the seeds can it produce or bear fruit. And so Jesus is indicating the absolute necessity of his death. Jesus had to die for our sins because there was no other way for us to receive eternal life.

And Jesus is saying this principle for his own life, death producing life, is one that must be followed by his disciples. And we see that in verse 25.

[18:05] It involves great cost, but it brings great reward. And interestingly, despite Jesus' death being a necessity, that didn't make it easy.

Verse 27. Jesus says, Now my soul is troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.

Jesus knew the physical agony he would face on the cross and the emotional agony that he would have to endure. Fully God, but yet fully man.

He is troubled by what he would have to face. But he knew this was why he came. And so he prays in verse 28. Father, glorify your name.

To which the Father responds, I have glorified it and will glorify it again. The Father is giving his approval to the work that the Son has done.

[19:06] And yet greater glory would come through the Son's death on the cross. So Jesus says, verse 31. Now is the time for judgment on this world.

Now the prince of this world will be driven out. He's describing what his death would achieve. His death would bring judgment on this world. And his death would also defeat the prince of this world. Satan, the devil. Verse 32. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

Jesus is talking about being lifted up on the cross. Physically, he was lifted up, executed, and he died. But when he died, he was also lifted up in this exalted sense.

Exalted on the cross because that's where he accomplished his work. That's why he says his death will draw all people to myself. Meaning Jews and Gentiles.

[20:10] All people without distinction will be welcomed by Jesus into his kingdom. And yet what Jesus is saying was lost on the crowd.

They didn't understand that the Messiah King had to die. They didn't expect the King to die. Or even understand who the Son of Man is. How could the King be glorified through his death?

That made no sense to them. They're still in the dark. And Jesus is the light. And so Jesus urges them in verse 36. Believe in the light while you have the light.

So that you may become children of light. It's an invitation to respond to the light when they could. Which has application for us too.

I'm sure that we've all missed out on a good offer before. You know, a time-limited offer. Maybe an online sale. And the clock runs out at midnight and you don't get those jeans for half price or whatever it is.

[21:14] Or maybe a pre-sale ticket for a concert. Or the time runs out and you miss the chance to get your ticket. Or there's this window of opportunity to do something.

But if you don't respond soon, the time runs out. And Jesus has been teaching what his death achieves. It gives people eternal life.

And so he's saying we miss out if we fail to respond to him while we still can. While there is still time. Because the death of Jesus is of no benefit to us if we do not believe.

And that's why we've got to see finally the reality of the rejected king. That Jesus is the rejected king. Verse 37 to 50. Despite Jesus coming as God's king, he is rejected.

Verse 37 says, Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. And so here the problem wasn't a lack of evidence.

[22 : 19] Jesus had performed many signs. The problem was unbelief. Which is still the same today. It's not that there's not enough proof or evidence for Jesus.

It's not that there is a lack of reason to believe. The problem is unbelief. And so that's why they rejected the king God had sent.

And it wasn't surprising. In fact, it was expected. This Jewish unbelief was foretold by the prophet Isaiah. Verse 38. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet.

Lord, who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? But it's not just that they would not believe. It's also that they could not believe.

Verse 39. For this reason, they could not believe. Because as Isaiah says elsewhere, He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts so that they can neither see with their eyes nor understand with their hearts nor turn and I would heal them.

[23 : 24] These two passages from Isaiah are fulfilled in the rejection of Jesus. So just as Isaiah's original hearers rejected his message, so Jesus' hearers here reject his message too.

And incredibly in verse 41, which says Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him. John's saying Isaiah saw Jesus in his vision.

In Isaiah's words in Isaiah chapter 6 are, I saw the Lord high and exalted seated on a throne. The same language that Isaiah uses when he speaks of the suffering servant who would be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.

And so when Jesus came to earth as king, he was lifted up and exalted on the cross. And yet he's rejected by his own people.

And so despite the prophecy, neither Israel in Isaiah's day or the Jews in Jesus' day, nor in fact anyone in our day can be excused for unbelief.

[24 : 38] We're all culpable. We're all responsible for our failure to believe in Jesus. Of course, there wasn't total unbelief in Jesus.

John points out there were exceptions. Many Jews, even leaders, did believe in Jesus, although they did it secretly. And so Jesus' closing words here emphasize the danger of rejecting him.

Verse 48 says, There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words. The very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.

And that makes perfect logical sense, doesn't it? If there's a king and you reject him, then you're guilty of high treason. And so you must be condemned.

And so if Jesus the king came to save you and you reject him, then you will be condemned. And so John's words are saying, don't make the same mistake as Jesus' listeners at the time who failed to see that Jesus was sent by God.

[25 : 52] Jesus says in verse 49, For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. I know that his command leads to eternal life.

So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say. Jesus only says what his Father has told him to say.

And so rejecting Jesus is rejecting the God who made you. Because Jesus' words lead to eternal life.

And so refusing to believe in Jesus and his message is to cut herself off from God forever. But the good news is that through Jesus' death and resurrection, he has defeated our enemies, Satan, sin, and death.

And he invites us to share in his victory in his everlasting kingdom. And so do not harden your heart against him in unbelief, but submit to his loving rule by believing in him.

[27 : 07] Don't protest against Jesus. Praise him for the eternal life that he gives. Jesus is king, glorified, and exalted.

And so he is worthy of our devotion. Let's pray. Thank you, our God, for sending your Son into this world to reveal you to us.

Thank you that Jesus gives that gift of eternal life for all those who believe in him. We thank you that he came to save.

And we thank you that through believing in him, we find that salvation in our experience and forevermore as we bow to Jesus as our king.

And so we give her thanks and praise. In Jesus' name, Amen.