

## Sunday Morning Message

September 18, 2022

*Closet Christians*

*The Gospel According to John*

Text – John 12:20

Congregational Reading – John 12:12:

### Introduction

We have been studying from the Gospel of John the events surrounding Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem from John 12. In vs. 1 – 11, Jesus entered Bethany where He attended a dinner at the home of Simon the Leper. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were there, and it was at this supper that Mary broke a bottle of expensive ointment and poured it over Jesus' head and anointed His feet with it. This caused a great deal of anger for Judas, and it was immediately after this that he sought an opportunity to turn Jesus in to the religious leaders.

In vs. 12 – 19, we examined the Triumphal Entry from John's perspective. Here is where it gets a little tricky to examine all that took place during the days and hours that followed His entry into Jerusalem. We know that at the Triumphal Entry the Jewish people were following Him and cried out, *"Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord"* (v. 13). That was on Sunday, but we also know that by Wednesday, this same group of people will be shouting "Crucify!"

When we compare Scripture with Scripture and examine the other three gospel accounts, we can see that many things happen in the days and hours that follow the Triumphal Entry. Luke tells us that Jesus got near the city that He wept over Jerusalem.

*"41 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, 42 Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. 43 For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, 44 And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."* (Luke 19:41-44)

According to Mark's gospel, He then enters the Temple but because it was getting late, He leaves Jerusalem and goes to Bethany (Mark 11:11)

## Other Events (in approximate order)

- Goes back to Jerusalem – curses the fig tree on the way (Mark 11:12 – 14)
- Cast out the money changers in Temple (Matthew 21:12 – 13; Mark 11: 15 – 17; Luke 19:45 – 46). He also heals some folks while He is in the Temple (Matthew 21:14). Meanwhile the religious leaders are plotting to kill Him (Matthew 21:15 – 16; Mark 11:18; Luke 19:47 – 48)
- Goes back to Bethany (Matthew 21:17; Mark 11:19)
- Come back to Jerusalem – the fig tree that He cursed the previous day is now withered (Matthew 21:18 – 22; Mark 11:22 – 26).
- The Pharisees question Him about His authority (Matthew 21:23 – 27; Mark 11:27 – 33).

*"27 And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, 28 And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things? 29 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 30 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me. 31 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? 32 But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed." (Mark 11:27-32)*

- Jesus warns Israel with the Parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28 – 32).
- Jesus warns them further with the Parable of the Vineyard (Matthew 21:33 – 46; Luke 12:1 – 12; Luke 20:9 – 18).
- Jesus warns them further with the Parable of the Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1 – 14).

Note – all three of these parables are directed to Israel.

- The Pharisees and Sadducees then begin to pepper Jesus with questions about taxes (Matthew 22:15 – 22; Mark 12:13 – 17; Luke 20:19 – 26), and the resurrection (Matthew 22:23 – 33; Mark 12:18 – 27; Luke 20:27 – 40). Note – these questions were designed to get Jesus to say something that would get Him into trouble,

- Jesus is questioned by a searching Scribe (Matthew 22:34 – 40; Mark 12:28 – 34).
- Jesus questions them about Christ being the son of David, but David also calling Him Lord (Matthew 22:41 – 46; Mark 12:35 – 37; Luke 20:41 – 44).
- Jesus warns the disciples about the Pharisees, and then rebukes the Pharisees (Matthew 23:1 – 39; Mark 12: 38 – 40; Luke 20:45 – 47).
- Jesus observes and comments upon the widow giving her mites (Mark 12:41 – 44; Luke 21:1 – 4).
- Jesus instructs the disciples regarding future events – The Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21).
- The Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1 – 13).
- The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14 – 30).
- The Judgment of the Nations (Matthew 25: 31 – 46).
- Jesus Predicts Crucifixion (Matthew 26:1 – 2).
- People Arrive Early to Hear Jesus (Luke 21:37 – 38)

I. **The Curiosity of the Crowd - leads to a conversation about the cross. (vs. 20 – 33)**

Notice in vs. 20 – 22 that Philip brings these Greeks, who were perhaps Jewish proselytes, to Andrew, and together they bring them to Jesus. You will recall that when Jesus first revealed Himself to Philip, Philip then went and found Nathanael. Philip seems to have a habit of bringing people to Jesus.

Notice the reference to the “corn of wheat” in v 24 is to Himself, but it is also clear that Jesus is going to demand the same thing from His followers.

*"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." - (Galatians 2:20)*

*"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." - (Colossians 3:3)*

Notice the Father’s voice from Heaven. This is now the third time that the Father speaks from Heaven regarding Christ.

Also at Jesus Baptism (Matthew 3:17)

Also at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35)

Notice v. 31 – “now is the judgment of this world” – I believe he was saying that through his death the sins of the world would be judged.

Notice also in v. 31 – “the prince of this world be cast out” – this is a reference to Satan. He was defeated at the Cross because it was through the Cross that a way was made for people to be released from his bondage of sin. Of course, Satan was not at all happy about this and would fight even more furiously to keep the world from turning to Jesus.

*"30 Hereafter I will not talk much with you: **for the prince of this world cometh**, and hath nothing in me." (John 14:30)*

*"11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." (John 16:11)*

Notice v. 32 – “if I be lifted up” – many references to this in John’s gospel (see John 3:14 & John 8:28). It is the Cross that will draw men to Christ.

*"14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:14-15)*

*"28 Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things." (John 8:28)*

## II. The Confusion of the Crowd - leads to a call for commitment. (vs. 34 – 36)

These folks could not wrap their heads around the fact that Christ was going to die. They thought that Christ was coming to set up the Kingdom. The idea of the Cross – of Christ dying for the sins of the world was foreign to them.

*"7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth **even for ever**. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." (Isaiah 9:7)*

In vs. 35 – 36, Jesus gives them a final invitation to trust in the Light (Himself) that they still had. He was still with them, and they needed to put their faith in Him.

### III. The Choice of the Crowd – leads to some cowardly, non-confessing, closet Christians. (vs. 37 – 50)

Notice – two prophecies from Isaiah are fulfilled in their rejection. (Isaiah 53; 6:9 & 10)

*"9 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. 10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."* (Isaiah 6:9-10)

Note – at this point the crowd is rejecting, but soon it will be crucifying.

Notice in vs. 42 – 43 - there were some, however, who became “Closet Christians.” They were secret believers.

(The following is an excerpt from the blog article – “Closet Christians”)

We often talk to our children about peer pressure, encouraging them to not follow the crowd, and instead live their lives boldly according to principle. Peer pressure is not something that just affects young people, however. Most adults also live their lives in a form of bondage that causes them to adapt to the world around them. Unfortunately, the same can be said about many Christian adults. When they are around the people of the church, they act like Christians and talk like Christians, but when they get out into the world, they want to fit in with them as well. In this passage we read about some religious leaders of Israel that secretly believed in Jesus. Nicodemus was no doubt part of this crowd. You will recall from John chapter 3 that Nicodemus was the one who came to Jesus by night, probably because he didn't want any of his friends to see him.

Christians are supposed to be salt and light to this world. We do not have the luxury as God's ambassadors to be chameleons, adapting to every group we are with. We need to be Christians all the time. When we are with our co-workers, or with extended family, or with the other parents of the kids that play sports with our child, we need to remember that our primary function in life is to draw attention to the Saviour and to glorify Him in all things. Stop trying to please or be like everybody and have enough guts to take a stand for the Lord. You don't have to be unkind or obnoxious; just be a Christian, and Christians should be different from the world around them.

We are living in a time where the world more than ever before needs to see some real Christians who truly live out their faith. Many of today's churches have adopted a people-

pleasing, seeker-sensitive brand of Christianity. These churches make it their main goal to give people whatever they want. We have adapted Burger King's "Have It Your Way" philosophy to our churches. The problem is that if we are just like the world around us. Why would they ever desire to be one of us? I became a Christian because I saw something different, something real in the people that claimed the name of Christ. They were not like me. They had something I didn't have, and I wanted it.

Christian, why don't you come out of the closet, and start living like a blood-washed Christian should live. Be the salt and light that God expects you to be. Look deep within yourself and find your backbone. It's there somewhere. Stop compromising what you believe, and show the world that you belong to Christ, and that you are not ashamed of it.

*"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you," – (2 Corinthians 6:17)*

*"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." – (Mark 8:38)*

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." – (Romans 1:16)*

**Come out of the closet!**

**In vs. 44 – 50 – Jesus is imploring with the people to put their faith in Him, and He is doing the same thing here today – He is begging you to receive Him as your Lord and Saviour before it is too late.**