

- I. Seeing the truth of scripture. Proclaiming the great things God has done. Death must precede life if we are to live the Christian life.
 - A. John 12:12-26 . . . On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, [13] took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel." [14] Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, [15] "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, seated on a donkey's colt" (Zechariah 9:9). [16] These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him. [17] So the people, who were with [Jesus] when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify about [Jesus]. [18] For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign. [19] So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him." [20] Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; [21] these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." [22] Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus. [23] And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. [24] Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. [25] He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. [26] If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.
 - B. Though there is much that can be said about this portion of John, today we will talk about (1st) Seeing the truth of scripture in your history and in world history; (2nd) Proclaiming the mercy of God and the great, or even just the good things He has done for you as a good method of evangelism; and (3rd) We will talk about the fact that death is required to live the Christian life – now and throughout eternity.
 - C. Prayer

- II. First, seeing the truth of scripture in world history and in your history.
- A. John 12:12-13 . . . Eleven chapters before John tells this story of the Palm Sunday crowd proclaiming Jesus to be the King of Israel, he told the story of Nathanael coming to Jesus, and saying, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel” (John 1:49).
1. In between those two events, John tells the story of Jesus feeding the 5000, who after being fed in this miraculous manner wanted to take Jesus, by force if necessary, and make Him their king of Israel (John 6:15). Therefore, this Palm Sunday story is the third time in John’s gospel that Jesus is talked about as being the King of the Jews.
 2. And though John does not include this story, at His trial, Pilot asked Jesus, “Are You the King of the Jews?” to which Jesus said, “It is as you say.” (Luke 23:3).
 3. However, what is important here is not that we recognize Jesus as King, but that we recognize the kind of king Jesus is. And John helps us discern the kind of king Jesus is by telling us in vs 14 that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a young donkey – indicating that though He was the conqueror, He was coming in peace – not to destroy His enemies or treat them with cruelty, but to invite them to become His subjects and live together with Him in peace.
- B. Which brings us to today’s first topic – which is about seeing the truth of scripture in world history and in your history.
1. According to John 12:16, the disciples did not make the connection between Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey and the OT prophecy written in Zechariah 9:9.
 2. However, following Jesus’ death and resurrection, they began to see the connections between the happenings in Jesus’ life and the OT scriptures. In fact, nine times in his gospel, Matthew points out how a particular event in Christ’s life fulfilled an OT scripture.
 3. In other words, while Jesus was alive, the disciples failed to make the connection between particular events and what God had revealed in His word. But upon looking back, they were able to see how this event and other events fulfilled, or in some other way, were linked to the OT scriptures.
 4. Sometimes we can see how an event, as it unfolds, is predicted or in some other way linked to God’s word. However, most of us tend to be like the disciples – we have to get past the event and then look back in order to see the link. But that’s okay, because just seeing a link confirms the truth of God’s word, and it encourages our conviction

that God is involved in the affairs of life, and it helps us discover practical steps or methods or ways to deal with the situation, and it assures us that even if we cannot figure out how to deal with the situation, we can rest in God's faithful love and care for us.

5. Therefore, I want to encourage you, as you read and study God's word and as you experience life or recall events in your life or in the world, see if there are any links between these events and the word of God. If you cannot see a link but suspect one is there one, ask God to show you both the link and if that link should affect your life. God is at work, and He has given us clues in both the Old and New Testament as to the purpose and intended outcome of His works. So look, and you will see the varied ways God is at work in your life, in our nation, and in the world.

III. Second, proclaiming the mercy of God and the great things He has done.

- A. In John 12:17-18, we read that the people, who were with [Jesus] when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify about Him (*that is, tell what Jesus did*). And though this was not the only reason, it was a significant part of the reason so many people went to meet Him on His way into Jerusalem.
- B. This is an example of a simple, anyone can do it, method of evangelism. We find a similar example at the end of the story about Jesus healing the man filled with the legion of demons. We read in Mark 5:18-20, that the man who was freed from the demons asked for the privilege to follow Jesus, but Jesus did not let him. Instead, Jesus told him to "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you." Therefore, he went home and proclaimed what great things Jesus had done for him – and according to the Bible, everyone was amazed.
 1. What I am hoping you can see is that anyone who has experienced God's mercy, provision, protection, healing, and empowerment for spiritual growth or for dealing with difficult situations has a story to tell that invites the listener to see God's goodness, love, faithfulness, and His personal in daily life. This is a form of evangelism – and a good one at that.
 2. Now please take note that this does not require any theological knowledge or scripture memorization or a well honed evangelistic method. All it requires is noticing and remembering specific occasions of God's goodness to you and a willingness to tell others.

IV. Third, death is required before we can enter into the life God has for us – beginning in this world and continuing on through eternity.

A. John 12:20-22. . . I want to begin this third lesson by pointing out that beginning in John 11:45 – 12:22, John has presented four kinds of religious people.

1. At the end of John 11, we saw that the highly educated religious leaders wanted something other than God more than God, which led to why they turned against God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore, I encouraged you to look at yourself to see if there is anything you want other than God more than God, and if so, to put a stop to it.
2. At the beginning of John 12, we have the story about Mary – who being a woman would have been considered of less importance than a highly educated man. Yet unlike the religious leaders, she treasured Jesus more than she treasured an earthly possession of great value. Therefore, I encouraged you to follow her example and treasure God above all else.
3. In John 12:17-18, we see the common Jews openly and even boldly proclaiming the great thing Jesus did in raising Lazarus, and they did this in spite of the threats from the religious leaders that those who supported Jesus would be put out of the Temple. Here again, I encouraged you to follow their example of simple, anyone can do it, evangelism.
4. And finally, here in vs 20-22, we see a group of religious Greeks asking for the privilege to talk to Jesus. And though Jesus did not grant them an audience, He did respond. However, before getting to His response, what I want us to consider is why John identifies the nationality of this group.
 - a. I think the reason John identifies their nationality is because they represent another kind of religious person.
 - b. For example, these Greeks came from a culture known for their zealous pursuit of truth, and a culture that had developed a way of thinking built on reason and logic. In addition, the Greeks had Socrates and his teachings and example of self-mastery over one's passions and predispositions. And the Greeks were known for their self-discipline and perseverance – especially in the pursuit of victory and the glory of victory in the Olympic games.
5. Now the important point here is that it was in response to the Greek's request to meet Him that Jesus spoke a profound truth, made two demanding requirements about living the Christian life, and promised a reward to those who lived accordingly.

- B. The profound truth Jesus spoke of is found in John 12:24 . . . Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
1. To put this truth into our own words, we might say it this way: “You must die, willingly and deliberately, before you can live a godly life and grow into a spiritually productive person.”
 - a. In other words, death must precede life – not just in relation to the life to come, but in relation to living a godly life here and now and bearing the kind of fruit God saved us to bear.
 - b. Not it is important to see that the death Jesus is talking about here is not a natural death, but rather an intentional, self-inflicted death that makes way for new life to come forth and grow into the plant intended to come from that seed, and to continue growing so that it produces the fruit that is intended to bear.
 2. Therefore, the dying and death that Jesus is talking about happens much sooner and goes much deeper than the kind of death that comes as a result of old age or an accident or disease. Jesus is talking about a self-inflicted death that touches our innermost being and the core of our beliefs, values, desires, ways of thinking, choices, and behavior.
 3. Paul explains the depth, extent, and timing of this dying in Romans 8:12-13, “So then, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— [13] for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”
 4. Now someone may ask, “What are the deeds of the body?” In Colossians 3:5-8, Paul gives us a clear list of what the deeds of the body include, for he says, “Put to death the members of your body that are on earth: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry...and also put these all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.”
 5. Admittedly, this is not an exhaustive list of what we must put to death in order to live the Christian life, but it gives us a good start, and it reinforces the truth that if we are to know God and live the Christian life, we must put to death whatever stands in the way of coming to God, believing what God says, obeying God, and living a godly life.
 6. In other words, we must die here and now in order to live the Christ-like life here and now. And to whatever degree we will not die, to that extent we will not live the Christian life, but rather – to that extent – we will go on living for ourselves in serving our flesh and following the ways of the world.

7. But there is another side to Jesus' example of falling into the ground and dying, and that side is growing to the place of bearing fruit.
 - a. In whatever area or way we choose not to die to something that prevents us from living a godly life, in those areas and in those ways we cannot produce the fruit God created us to produce as His children.
 - b. The reality is, you cannot lead anyone to a place you don't know how to get to. You cannot effectively disciple anyone on matters of the heart, the mind, and life that you have not dealt with in yourself.
 8. You can only produce fruit – in others – where you have willingly and deliberately died to your old ways and come alive to genuine godliness. You can only lead others where you have purposefully and honestly and thoughtfully gone. You can only show others those parts of the path of life that you know and understand because you have traveled there. You see, anyone can say the right words, but only those who have gone there know the way.
 9. What is my point? It is true that you must die to live a godly life, now and in eternity. But you must also die to bear fruit, a fruit that leads unbelievers to God, teaches sinners the way of life, leads young believers into godly maturity, and changes lives forever.
- C. After stating this profound truth, Jesus states two requirements for living the Christian life.
1. The first requirement is in vs 25 . . . He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.
 - a. This incorporates the dying to live truth we just talked about and it includes the lesson learned from Mary about valuing God above all else – including your life.
 - b. In other words, do you value a life that is lived according to your selfish and pride driven desires, and according to the pleasures, benefits, riches, power, and fame that the world and the devil offer, OR do you value a life that is humble and selfless and lived according to God's will and God's word?
 - c. You probably know the answer Christians ought to give, but that is only a start. Even if you choose the right answer as your answer, you must follow through by deliberately and persistently putting to death whatever there is in you that promotes loving your life in this world. Why? Because without putting those things to death, you will not go far enough with God and godly living to come to

the place where you love what God loves and want what God wants, and in so doing, live accordingly.

- d. In other words, where there is self-renunciation there is God's preservation of your life – now and forever. Jesus put it this way in Matthew 6:33, "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."
2. The second requirement is found in vs 26 . . . If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also.
 - a. It is one thing to believe in Jesus – which includes believing He is the son of God, and believing He died to save you, and believing God accepts His sacrifice in payment for your sins. But it is quite another thing to follow Jesus so as to live as He lives and go where He goes. You see, the first costs little. The second costs much.
 - b. Jesus showed how costly and demanding it is to follow Him when He said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me (*follow Me*), he must deny himself (*or die to self*), and take up his cross (*be prepared to die at any moment to anything that stands in the way of following Him*) and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24).
 - c. I believe it is a sad commentary on the modern church that it pushes service as a primary proof of godliness. And it is just as sad that so many seek service opportunities who have yet to grow to that measure of spiritual maturity where they are fit to serve. It is my opinion that in both cases, the driving motives have a lot to do with self and very little to do with God.
 - d. And so I urge you, make Jesus' view of Christian service your view, not to excuse yourself from service as if you will never be ready, but so that you do not step into a position of service when you are not ready for that position or kind of service.

V. Conclusion

- A. Do you remember God's promise to exalt those who humbled themselves before Him? Well, we have a similar promise here. Jesus says that God will honor those who serve according to God's requirements of service.
- B. In other words, if you die in order to live, and if you die so you can bear fruit, and if you hate your life in this world in order to live for God in this world, and if you follow Jesus – wherever He goes, **GOD WILL HONOR YOU** with an honor that is above any honor the world can give and with an honor that lasts throughout eternity.