



## The Book of Signs - Week 8 - Glory

### Week 8, Day 1

#### **John 12:12-19 -- Triumphal entry**

*<sup>12</sup> The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!*

*Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—  
the King of Israel!"*

*<sup>14</sup> Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written:*

*<sup>15</sup> "Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion.  
Look, your king is coming,  
sitting on a donkey's colt!"*

*<sup>16</sup> His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him. <sup>17</sup> So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify. <sup>18</sup> It was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him. <sup>19</sup> The Pharisees then said to one another, "You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!"*

#### **Understanding the Passage:**

The setting for this passage is Passover (11:55), the first of the three great pilgrimage festivals of the Jewish calendar year. As commanded in Exodus 23:14-17; 34:18 and Deuteronomy 16:1-17, all Jewish men were obligated to be present in Jerusalem for Passover, held in the spring, commemorating the exodus; Shavuot (Weeks, or Pentecost), held seven weeks after Passover, offering the first fruits of the crops; and Sukkot (Booths), the harvest festival held in autumn. One can imagine that during these festivals the city overflowed with people with many staying outside in tents. These are the folks who line the street and wave the palm branches. To see the crowd respond to Jesus in this way is intolerable to the Pharisees.

Jesus travels the three miles from the home of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary in Bethany to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. Once in Jerusalem the crowd rushes out to meet him. The city is buzzing with excitement about Jesus because they have heard of his signs, especially the raising of Lazarus (v. 18). The word on the street was that this was the promised Messiah King. The crowd shouts words from Psalm 118:25-26, a psalm always sung at Passover. "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord-the King of Israel!" The phrase "the King of Israel" is an addition to the words of the psalm. "Hosanna" means in both Hebrew and Aramaic, "Save (us), please!" These phrases can communicate a petition and also a joyous outcry. Both are fitting for this scene. Both usages point us, as John wants, to Jesus as the Messiah. They cheer Jesus and offer praise (Luke 19:37), as he is the one who may deliver Israel from the Romans. In John the crowd greets Jesus with palm branches (unlike the synoptic Gospels that only name branches and coats), which have special political meaning. Palm branches commonly signaled victory over one's oppressor/ enemy. Witnessing all of these events causes the Pharisees to accept that this Jesus is indeed a big problem. They are losing the religious power to which they are accustomed.

In our post-resurrection time, it is easy for us to interpret their cry for salvation as one for eternal life. It's easy for us to get salvation from a Roman Empire mixed up with salvation from sin. We must read the text as it is given to us here. These people are asking Jesus to deliver them from under an oppressive ruler and system. They are saying, "save us right now!"

What does this mean for us? Our faith is not simply a life of suffering as we wait and long for eternal life. We don't pray the right prayer, get our ticket to heaven, and then try to make the best of this fallen place as we await our cruise ship to paradise. Instead, we can call out to Jesus to save us now! In our best times and worst times, we can call out. When we are in need of a sign that the Messiah is at work, we too can make Hosanna our heart's cry.

But Christ didn't do the salvific work for which they were asking. Jesus was not the king who overthrew the government by mobilizing resources and military powers. He didn't gather and train generals and soldiers. He followed the will of his Father by healing, bringing life abundant, and ultimately declaring the power of sin null and void. His salvific work was to pour himself out, to get low - not to fight, but to submit.

Jesus did save people from the immediate issues that ailed them through his teaching, upsetting religious allegiance to the law rather than the one who fulfills the law, healing and miracles. Christ fed thousands actual food. He restored the unclean and ostracized to their communities. He lifted up women and minorities as examples of faith and workers of the Kingdom. He did throw out life rafts and transformed lives this side of eternal life. His very presence on earth continues to bring healing and change lives. Will we ask him to do it? Will we cry hosanna? Will we follow his directions even when they upset the systems in our lives? When Christ answers our prayer, will we have eyes to see the Messiah at work?

### **Questions for Discussion and Reflection:**

1. How does the setting of Passover festival change the way you view this story?
2. What do you need saving from right now? Yourself? An overly full calendar? Pressure and obligations? Toxic emotional cycles? A feeling of isolation or despair? Feeling as if you don't matter? Reflect. Name it. And cry out Hosanna to Jesus and then take the life raft he sends.
3. Spend time putting yourself in the crowd's shoes. Imagine what it's like to live under an oppressive regime. How is this being replicated in our nation and around the world? Offer a prayer of Hosanna for those folks. How might you be the life raft the Jesus sends?

## Week 8, Day 2

### **John 12:20-26 -- Those who love their lives will lose it**

*<sup>20</sup> Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. <sup>21</sup> They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." <sup>22</sup> Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup> Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.*

### **Understanding the Passage:**

Throughout the Book of Signs, we've seen various groups of people seek a conversation with Jesus - the disciples, the Pharisees and Jewish leaders, massive crowds, and those in need of healing and restoration. In this last section of John, a new group is featured - the Greeks. We are not given much information about these individuals, but we can assume that they respect Christ's authority to some extent as evidenced by the method in which they seek him. It appears they have good manners in that they do not rush up and accost Jesus, but instead they approach Philip who then enlists Andrew.

Note that we are not told that Jesus walks over to the Greeks and responds to them directly. One might initially interpret this as Jesus, being the busy Savior that he is, cannot be bothered to teach such Gentiles directly. Our modern framework might make it seem as if he sends his administrative assistants over to relay the same old message we've seen thus far. The highlight of this passage is the message of pouring oneself out, but also John highlights who is to give the message. Who does Christ empower to relay this message of salvation? Philip and Andrew. The Book of Signs has been pointing us to the authority of the Messiah who teaches with Messianic authority. But now as this small moment points us to a giant shift that extends even to us as practicing Christians. Once we become followers of Jesus we agree to 'lose our life' in various ways. One of those ways is that the message our lives preach is centered on the message of Christ.

There's a shift in this passage in who can preach salvation, but there is also a shift in who has been offered the invitation - Greek Gentiles, those who are not descendants of Abraham. These Greek folks were those who has rejected the pagan religions of the day and had converted to Judaism. Their worship would have been restricted to the court of the Gentiles. The very fact that the message of the Messiah is offered to them raises a significant question. What place do the Gentiles have in the covenant God made with Israel?

God establishes the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) promising that his descendants will be blessed, but also that they will be a blessing to *all* nations. This concept is echoed in several place of the Old Testament- Isaiah 49:6 offers that God will make Israel a light to all nations so that "my salvation may reach the end of the earth." Zachariah 2:11 explicitly names that many nations will join themselves with Israel. God's covenant with Israel is a starting point for the larger purpose of restoring all of humanity. John gives us a glimmer of this that will be fulfilled on the cross, in the grave and in the resurrection.

The movement of the Gospel is one that widens the gates and welcomes all to be saved and also to share the message of salvation. We do well to continually live with this understanding at the front of our minds. We are the disciples who share hope to all the nations. We are Philip and Andrew being given the charge to share the never-ending love of Jesus.

**Questions for Discussion and Reflection:**

1. What does it look like to truly live as a follower of Jesus? How is this life costly?
2. How might have Philip and Andrew felt in receiving the charge to share this message? How do you feel about receiving this charge?
3. What does it mean to “hate your life in this world” in order to gain it as Jesus teaches?
4. What parts of your life need to “get lost” for you to make room for sharing God’s love with others?

**Week 8, Day 3**

**John 12:27-36 -- Jesus speaks about his death**

*<sup>27</sup> “Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. <sup>28</sup> Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” <sup>29</sup> The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” <sup>30</sup> Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. <sup>31</sup> Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. <sup>32</sup> And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” <sup>33</sup> He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. <sup>34</sup> The crowd answered him, “We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” <sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, “The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. <sup>36</sup> While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light.”*

*After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them.*

**Understanding the Passage:**

The Light of the world is present, but the darkness seems to be closing in, and Jesus' hour has come. The Son of Man will be lifted up, pointing to the cross. Residing on this side of the resurrection one might miss this gruesome declaration that he will be crucified because we are more familiar with resurrection language. But no, the glory is not only shown in the resurrection, it is shown in the crucifixion. Skipping over Good Friday and Holy Saturday causes one to miss so much glory to behold.

One easily recalls the voice of God events in the Synoptic Gospels, but this is the only Gospel that features God’s voice in this Gethsemane-like scene. Many familiar events from the Synoptics are “reworked” by John to communicate his larger message. There are some who believe and some who do not. There are some who understand and believe and others that attempt to explain the signs away with logic. His final charge is to believe in the light and become children of the light. Regardless of their belief this moment is yet another authentication of divine favor even here near Christ’s end and his desire to share himself with all who will listen. However, the choice is theirs alone.

Jesus says these things and then hides himself. He is not seen again publicly until he is "lifted up" as part of the passion narrative. The verdict from the world is coming, but so is Christ's glorification. No act of mankind can do away with the light of the world. As the Son of Man is lifted up on the cross, lifted up from the grave, and lifted up from the earth, Isaiah's "light to the nations" will be seen.

### **Questions for Discussion and Reflection:**

1. We can innocently attempt to make sense of miracles. What are some ways you have explained away God's voice or work in your life? Reflect.
2. What is Christ communicating to the people? Why is this significant?
3. What does it mean to be a child of the light?

### **Week 8, Day 4**

#### **John 12:36b-43 -- Unbelief of the people**

*After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them. <sup>37</sup> Although he had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in him. <sup>38</sup> This was to fulfill the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah:*

*"Lord, who has believed our message,  
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"*

*<sup>39</sup> And so they could not believe, because Isaiah also said,*

*<sup>40</sup> "He has blinded their eyes  
and hardened their heart,  
so that they might not look with their eyes,  
and understand with their heart and turn—  
and I would heal them."*

*<sup>41</sup> Isaiah said this because he saw his glory and spoke about him. <sup>42</sup> Nevertheless many, even of the authorities, believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; <sup>43</sup> for they loved human glory more than the glory that comes from God.*

#### **Understanding the Passage:**

Many believed and many did not - a sentiment echoed throughout John's Gospel. These words hold so much weight in them. It is sad indeed to read that people had the Messiah right in front of them, heard his voice, looked into his eyes and still did not believe. How could this happen? The answer seems so easy to us! Of course, the right choice is to believe! However, John explains exactly why this choice was not so easy for some. Look to verse 42 - they did not confess it for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue, and they loved human glory more than the glory that comes from God.

The lens through which we read this passage must be considered. We live in a world in which each individual has been taught that it is virtuous to go out and "make a name for themselves." We all want the American Dream where we can climb ladders and secure our futures. In more recent days this is done through monetized social media ventures and likes, shares, and subscribes are the 'glory' we seek. However, in Christ's day there was no such thing as making a name for myself.

There was no real “I.” The individual was always a part of the whole, the family. As a culture that values individuality it’s easy for our eyes to rest on verse 43, “for they loved human glory more than the glory that comes from God.” But I can assure you this is not where the real issue lies. If we wanted to go there, we certainly could identify with it, but we’d miss an opportunity to understand and then identify with the plight of the Pharisees.

Look to verse 42- They feared they would be put out of the synagogue. They were afraid that they’d lose everything- their way of life, their relationship, their standing in the community, their livelihood, their power. Any of us would be able to identify with this form of fear. Many of us, when presented with the command to give it all up, would also be hesitant. Think of it this way – if Jesus showed up today, he’d be seen as a new and controversial pastor. If he comes into church and tells me the entire way I’ve oriented my life needs to be shifted (not just internally shifted but shifted in such a way that everyone in my life would notice), the consequences of these actions would get me stripped of my ordination credentials, cause me to lose my job, strip my family of healthcare and benefits for future financial security, our social circle would back up from us and possibly even our devout Christian family would desert us. All of this in order to follow some unorthodox, untrained, young, maverick kid preacher. Let’s be clear, Jesus is making the right ask, but one can understand the hesitation.

You see friends, it’s easy to vilify the Pharisees. It’s easy on this side of the resurrection to claim that we would be believers the very first sign we witnessed. But, many of us are living exactly how we’d live back then - according to the social and religious order of the day. Believing is the hard road. Believing is the sacrificial road. It’s the road of change, disorder, disruption, loving the unlovable, giving yourself away, “wasting time” on the hopeless, and orienting our life into rhythms of grace rather than rigid rule following. It’s the journey that asks us to lose life as we know it and shift, step into the Light.

But some hold onto their way of life with a death grip, literally. The grip of the Pharisees on their established lives would lead to the death of the Savior of the world, their Savior. Isaiah knew that this would be the way- hardened hearts piercing the heart of the one who brings healing. The final words of this section give us hope, we are always welcomed to turn to Jesus and receive healing. This side of the resurrection the invitation to turn to Jesus is always there.

### **Questions for Discussion and Reflection:**

1. Have there been times you’ve loved human glory more than the glory of God? Are there places in your life where this might still be true? Reflect and have a gentle conversation with God about it.
2. Take an honest inventory of your life. Start with your calendar. Does it reflect that you’re a follower of Christ? Where might you shift? Where might you release your grip?
3. What does it mean to believe in this passage?

## Week 8, Day 5

### John 12:44-50 -- Summary of Jesus' teaching

*44 Then Jesus cried aloud: "Whoever believes in me believes not in me but in him who sent me. 45 And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. 46 I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness. 47 I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; on the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge, 49 for I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, I speak just as the Father has told me."*

### Understanding the Passage:

Christ's final public ministry is given to us here. If this passage were sent by Jesus in a text message it would be in all caps. He cries aloud his theological summary as told by John. These final verses are the summarization of what he has been teaching and preaching all along in the Book of Signs. He hits every note again- belief in Christ causes one to live in the light, judgement and eternal life are in his hands, there is an inextricable relationship between the Father and Son.

Because Christ repeats this message often it seems as though he knew the folks of that day wouldn't get it and John seems to have thought that we, too, would not get it. So judgement is at the tip of Christ's tongue when teaching including here. The repetitive use of judgement here may make us uneasy. We read and reread passages like this with the desire to make sure we are indeed recipients of eternal life. We also read passages like to with a desire to figure out how exactly does this judgement thing work. Is it really that easy? Believe in Christ? What's the catch? It can't be that easy, right? Spoiler alert: it is as easy a flipping on the light switch - believing that the Light is available.

Judgement is not a common sermon series topic in modern churches. This concept of judgement has been wielded to shame or scare people into faith. As modern readers, we often mistake judgement for a cultural concept of being judgmental. These two concepts couldn't be more different. So it's important to really dig into the message that Christ and John offer here. How does judgement work with the God whose name is love? What's the relationship to salvation and judgement?

Let's revisit the light and dark imagery that John employs so often. There is indeed darkness in the world and often in the hearts of humans. But where there is light, there is sight and clarity. Where there are things that need work, the light gets shone upon it and it can be addressed. Where there is sin or brokenness, Christ's love illuminates it so that the inviting warmth of the great physician can bring healing. Christ did not come to judge, but to save. Rather than depicting Christ as sitting on a throne sorting people for damnation and salvation, he continually calls Christ the light. This Light will illuminate the dark corners of the world revealing good or bad fruit. If we allow the Light to shine in our lives today and every moment forward there will be clarity and opportunities to reject sin within us because we'll be able to see it for what it is. This concept of eternal life includes past, present and future. Salvation comes to us today, shining a light on the darkness of our past, and lighting the way for the future. Thanks be to God.

**Questions for Discussion and Reflection:**

1. Give a summary of Christ's teaching in your own words.
2. What speaks to you about the light and dark language utilized by Christ and John?
3. What is the difference between judgmental and that Christ will judge?
4. What is the call to action for you from this passage? Reflect and pray into it.
5. After having walked through the Book of Signs what are the major themes and messages that you are taking away? How will you implement them into you daily living?

**Video Questions:**

1. What is the difference between the Book of Signs and the Book of Glory? Share about your experience with both books. (Book of Glory is also available in the S+S Ap).
2. What does the word glory indicate in these passages?
3. Name all the places this week that light and darkness is utilized.
4. What are the implications for those of us who live in the light? What does their life look like?
5. How does your life shine the light of Christ into the world? Share about a specific example.
6. How do the Pharisees respond to the Light of Christ?
7. What is Andrew's involvement in the Gospel of John?
8. How does one "lose their life" in order to gain it? What does it mean to you? How does this look in your own life?
9. What do you think that leads people to choose Jesus? What made you choose Jesus? How can you share that with others?
10. How is your life like the Pharisees, clutching to the status quo? Where might your shift ever so slightly?
11. Who is Jesus?

**Prayer requests and other notes:**