

Text: John 12:12-19

Title: Believe because He entered Passover triumphantly

Time: 4/13/25 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: This past week I heard a message in Orwell, OH on John 17 by Pastor John Mark Turner of the Hardingville Bible Church in New Jersey. John 17 contains our Lord's high priestly prayer for His people. The first request the Lord makes of His Father in that prayer is that the Father would glorify Him. Pastor Turner explained that in the Gospel of John, when Jesus spoke of His glorification, He spoke of being glorified by way of the cross.

John calls that moment of glorification through the cross Jesus's "hour" in his Gospel. In John 2:4, Jesus said to Mary, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour has not yet come." In John 7:30, a hostile crowd "sought to take him, but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come." This happens again for the same reason in John 8:30, "These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come."

It is in this chapter 12 that this hour comes. Verse 23 tells us this: "And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified." Jesus later prays, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour" (v. 27). And in the first verse of chapter 13, John fondly remembers the love of Christ, who faced this hour: "Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."

John 12 describes Jesus's preparation for the hour of His glorification through the cross. Jesus is prepared for this hour by Mary's anointing for His burial in vv. 1-11 and by His triumphal entry to the Passover in our passage.

This triumphal entry is a tragic event without understanding the nature and the importance of this hour, without understanding the way Jesus would be glorified through the cross. If Jesus's glory was to crush His enemies in Jerusalem, enthrone Himself as King of Israel, and throw off the oppression of Rome from the backs of the Jews, then there is no triumph in this triumphal entry. None of that was accomplished. Instead, the opposite happened.

John's purpose for this account is to convince its readers that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in His name, because He entered the Passover truly triumphantly, although headed for the cross. I want us to see three things about Jesus's triumph.

I. The crowd anticipates Jesus's triumph (vv. 12-13, 17-18).

Illustration: We have snow, not palm trees here in New Hampshire. Date palms were plentiful in first century Palestine. The use of palm branches as a sign of national victory is traceable to 141 B.C. when Simon the Maccabee drove Syrian forces out of the Jerusalem citadel. After his victory, this warrior was praised in the streets with the waving of palm branches. Judean coins bore the image of the palm tree, kind of like the palmetto tree is a key symbol for the state of South Carolina.

Application: The crowd's waving palm branches at Jesus anticipated another Maccabean triumph. The people formed a huge crowd ("much people," v. 12), having come

from all over the world to celebrate this Passover feast that marked the beginning of the Jewish new year. The Passover memorialized the redemption of Israel from slavery in Egypt through the tenth plague and the deliverance of the blood of the Passover lamb.

They hear Jesus is coming, and they run to meet Him. They cry out, "Hosanna," which means "Save now" or "Please save," and "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel." They were quoting Psalm 118:25-26, which speaks of the promised Messiah. But that prophecy also tells us that the coming one would be a stone rejected by the builders (v. 22). The crowd had skipped over that part of the Psalm, but Jesus had not. John's Gospel is telling us here about another miracle-driven misunderstanding. They anticipated Jesus's triumph the wrong way.

II. Jesus came for a different triumph (vv. 14-15).

Illustration: Our calendars call this Lord's Day *Palm Sunday*. Interestingly, the Gospels never explicitly say that the triumphal entry happened on the first day of the week. Here in John, verse 12 tells us that it happened "on the next day," and so to figure out what day that was, we need to go back to see what the text says about the day before this day of the triumphal entry.

That search takes us back to verse 1 of the chapter: "Then Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany." So "the next day" of verse 12 is five days before the Passover. Now if five days before the Passover is Palm Sunday, then six days before the Passover would have been the Jewish sabbath on Saturday. But as I thought about that conclusion, it did not seem to fit what we read in verse 2. A Jewish family would not make a meal like this on the sabbath.

That understanding led to a morning-long study as I tried to figure out what happened on what day, starting with that sixth day prior to the Passover. I concluded some time ago, with the help of a study by Dr. David Reagan on the 70 weeks prophecy of Daniel 9 (available at newbostonbaptist.org/Resources), that Jesus was crucified in the year A.D. 31. That year, Passover happened on Wednesday, and the study shows that Jesus was crucified at 9am on Wednesday.

With that as a starting point, it means that the day of verse 1, six days prior to the Passover, was a Friday, and what we call Palm Sunday was actually Palm Saturday. I have concluded that the triumphal entry happened on the sabbath prior to the Passover on Wednesday.

This is significant, because that sabbath prior to Passover was celebrated by the Jews each year as the Great Sabbath (Shabbat Hagadol). It was a special sabbath, because it was used every year to remember the importance of the 10th of Nissan, the first month of the Jewish calendar (Exod. 12:1-6). The Passover meal was always on the 14th of this first month, but on the 10th of Nissan, five days prior to the Passover meal, the lamb for the Passover was fetched from the field and brought into the house. It was kept in the house a few days before being slaughtered for the Passover.

Application: So why did the Lord pick the Great Sabbath to make His triumphal entry into Jerusalem? He did so because He came as the Passover Lamb, fetched from the field into the house for the Passover sacrifice. He came in fulfillment of verse 22 of Psalm 118, which had to come before verses 25 and 26. He came in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, which John quotes in our passage (v. 15).

Illustration: I have enjoyed seeing Hayley Anderson compete on her horse. Her competition horse is a mighty

physical specimen honed and trained for the sport of jumping. Long hours of practice have made rider and horse one in their dangerous but graceful performances. Hayley would not win many competitions if she had to ride the colt of a donkey that had never been ridden before.

The same is true for warriors and their war horses. Revelation 19:11 tells us that when Jesus comes again, He will be riding a white war horse. He will be accompanied by armies, and He will make the kingdoms of this world His kingdom at a great battle called *Armageddon*.

But here in John 12, we have Jesus's first coming. The quoted prophecy in Zechariah explains, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zech. 9:9).

And so Jesus came this first time for a different triumph, the triumph of His suffering and sacrifice on the cross for our sins, and the triumph of His resurrection from the dead so that we can have eternal life. The crowd in their enthusiasm looked for a political triumph, not the spiritual one that Jesus was offering. And yet, if we by faith accept the triumph of the cross, we can rejoice greatly, and we need not fear because we too belong to the daughter of Zion.

Do you see why Jesus came the first time? Do you see how you need the triumph of the forgiveness of sins He secured for you? Or are you like the crowd, completely missing what the King has done for you because you are busy pursuing your own man-centered goals and agendas in life? Sadly, many will raise a palm branch today who know nothing of their need for the sacrifice of this Lamb fetched from the field to die for our sins.

III. We must respond to Jesus's triumph (vv. 16, 19).

Illustration: As a college football fan, I respond to triumphs. As an Ohio State fan, two responses to triumph were especially significant this past season. The Buckeyes lost for the fourth year in a row to Michigan, our archrival. My response to the triumph of Michigan was helpless disappointment. And then we sailed through the playoffs, winning the first national championship of the college playoff era, and my response to that triumph was to remember how good it is to be a Buckeye fan.

Application: We see both kinds of responses in our passage to the triumph of Jesus Christ. On the one hand, there are the Pharisees of verse 19. They respond to Jesus's triumph with helpless sadness, exasperation, even desperation. They respond to Jesus and His claims as though He were their archrival. They are getting the sense that they are over-matched, as their threatened hearts are beginning to think that their efforts to oppose Him had been useless.

As Jesus's hour approaches, they are going to be encouraged again in their opposition to this chosen rival, but ultimately even that success is to their doom, because the cross they nail Jesus to is His triumph. It is His glory. Their response in verse 19 foreshadows the reality of the resurrection, by which time the enemies of Christ will have done all they could to destroy Him, slaughtering Him on the Roman cross, only once again to see all the world still go after Him.

The disciples came to understand Jesus's triumph at that time (v. 16). Their response is to see in His suffering His glorification. They came to their realization slowly, and they did not come to it until they had sufficient understanding to do so. True faith in Jesus's triumph is never the leap

in the dark of blind faith. It is a response to unassailable evidence, what Luke calls “many infallible proofs” in Acts 1:3.

Conclusion: We too must respond to Jesus’s triumph on the cross. Are we threatened by it, because we want to be our own king, and this King is our archrival to that agenda? Or are we delivered from fear and rejoicing greatly, so thankful that this Lamb was fetched from the field to be our Pass-over deliverer, to die for us, His people, and make us His daughter of Zion?

Later in Jesus’s hour of suffering, the Roman governor Pilate struggles to respond to Jesus’s triumph. His wife had a nightmare about Jesus and warned him to be careful about what he would do with Him. Pilate orders His crucifixion for political reasons, but he still places a sign on Jesus’s cross naming Him “King of the Jews” over their protests.

We have a song in our hymnal (#557) that speaks of Pilate’s struggle to respond, and our need to face the choice he did:

“What Will You Do With Jesus?”

“Jesus is standing in Pilate’s hall,
Friendless, forsaken, betrayed by all;
Hearken! what meaneth the sudden call?
What will you do with Jesus?”

“Will you evade Him as Pilate tried?
Or will you choose Him, whate’er betide?
Vainly you struggle from Him to hide:
What will you do with Jesus?”

“Jesus is standing on trial still,
You can be false to Him if you will,
You can be faithful through good or ill:
What will you do with Jesus?”

“What will you do with Jesus?
Neutral you cannot be;
Someday your heart will be asking,
‘What will He do with me?’”

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching