

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN SESSION 14

Review: Last week we went through chapter 11 where Lazarus fell sick and his sisters sent for Jesus. He did not come immediately when they called even though he wasn't far off. Lazarus died and they buried him and both sisters let Jesus know how they felt about his absence in this calamity. He declared to Martha that he is the resurrection, and the life; and that her brother would live again. A crowd of unbelieving Jews came to help them mourn and they all went to the tomb. Jesus had them roll the stone away, said a short prayer, and called for Lazarus to come forth....and he did. Many in the crowd that day believed on Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God because they were witnesses to what he did. Some went off to tattle to the Pharisees what had happened and they took counsel with the high priest to put him to death. Jesus again withdraws from Jerusalem but the Passover is approaching and they are wondering if he will come to the feast?

John 12:1-3 Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. *This is a small scale picture of a New Testament church: Martha is serving, Mary is worshiping, Lazarus is fellowshiping and Jesus is the at the heart of all of it. All of their actions are motivated by love and gratitude for what has been done for them. Mary's pound of spikenard was valued at 300 denarii. A single denarius was generally the equivalent of one day's wage for an average laborer so her container cost nearly a year's wages.*

John 12:4-8 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always. *Judas was a covetous thief who overvalued money and undervalued the Lord. Jesus quickly came to Mary's defense and declared the purpose of what she was doing. It was given to her to be the one to anoint his body for burial. His death is near and though Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea did what they could to give Jesus a proper burial, the Lord credits Mary with the honor.*

John 12:9-11 Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the

dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus. *Raising Lazarus brought many people to faith but it also was a giant step towards the cross. Lazarus was now dangerous because he was a living testimony to the power of God and undeniable proof that Jesus is the Son of God.*

John 12:12-18 On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and *that* they had done these things unto him. The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. *This is what we now call "Palm Sunday". By riding into Jerusalem on the donkey, he was fulfilling prophecy and publicly showing the nation that he is their King.*

Zechariah 9:9 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. *The crowd that was present when Lazarus was raised and believed, were back in Jerusalem now and testifying to who Jesus is and what he has done. These are the people taking palm branches and crying "Hosanna" which means "please save us". It's both a plea for rescue and a joyful shout of praise. Their actions moved other people to go forth and meet him.*

John 12:19-22 The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him. And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. *The Pharisees are full of envy which is a dangerous and destructive sin. Some Greeks who were likely Gentiles that had converted to Judaism (which is why they are present for the feast) approach Philip about seeing Jesus (they want to meet him). They more than likely approach Philip because Philip is a Greek name and he is from Bethsaida (a heavily Gentile-influenced region). This signals a turning point that Jesus's ministry is now drawing the broader world to himself.*

John 12:23-26 And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall

lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. *The “hour” that Jesus is referring to is his impending crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. This is what it means for him to be “glorified”. The example of the grain of wheat is two-fold, both about Christ himself and for his followers. As long as the grain isn’t planted, it doesn’t die but it remains singular. But if it’s planted it dies and multiplied life comes from its death. When Christ died and was raised, he began multiplying himself. First in the apostles, then in the three thousand on Pentecost and five thousand after the lame man was healed outside the temple gate and so on. When we were saved, Christ multiplied. The same applies to us: if we live for self now, we lose our life later (rewards and reigning) and whatever we did here will be destroyed anyway. But if we die to self now and live for Christ, our life will be multiplied in the lives we touch for God and we’ll be given rewards and rulership.*

John 12:27-30 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. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, *saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. The weight of what was about to happen to him is now falling on him. He understands that this is the will of his Father and there is no way around it so he will endure it for His glory. The word translated “troubled” means extreme terror, horror, and inner turmoil. Instead of focusing on his own suffering, Jesus shifts the focus entirely to the Father. The Father responds validating Jesus to the crowd. People in the crowd heard differing things but Jesus told them plainly it was a voice, and it came for their benefit.*

John 12:31-33 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die. *The “world” refers to the satanic system- cultures, philosophies, and structures that function in direct rebellion against God. The cross is the place where we see what sinful man really thinks about God and what God really thinks about sin. The judgment on sin was poured out on the Son of God, taking the penalty away from believers. Satan is the prince of this world and the death of Christ on the cross stripped him of his ultimate legal authority and power over those who trust in God.*

John 12:34-36 The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he

goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them. *The crowd expresses confusion over Jesus' prediction of his impending death, as they believe that the Messiah is supposed to live forever. Jesus responds not by engaging in theological debate, but by urging them to believe in him immediately before their opportunity to do so disappears.*

John 12:37-43 But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with *their* eyes, nor understand with *their* heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him. Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. *This ends the public ministry of Jesus in the gospel of John. He withdraws and hides himself as he always does because of their unbelief. The way of God is a time of visitation when He reveals to you what He wants you to believe. If you don't believe in the time given, He takes away the light He gave, and your condition is worse than before. Some of the religious leaders believed in Jesus but hid their faith because they prioritized human approval over God's acceptance. They did not pay the social and personal price of discipleship revealing what their hearts were really set on.*

John 12:44-50 Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak. *The words of Jesus here serve as God's final notice. These remarks summarize the message of Jesus in the gospel of John. The Father and Son are so united that to see the Son is seeing the Father also. Hearing the Son is the same as hearing the Father also. Believing in the Son is believing in the Father also. The world is in darkness, and Jesus Christ is the light that came into it. Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father and eternal life. Those who don't believe and walk in the light will be judged by the light they rejected.*

Tonight's application: John 12:24-26 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will *my* Father honour.

Salvation is totally free but discipleship will cost you everything. Every believer has a choice of whether they will “love their life” and live for their own satisfaction or “hate their life” and live for the glory of Christ. In his 1937 book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, German theologian and pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously contended that “cheap grace” was the deadly enemy of our church and characterized it by the following:

- **Grace without price** – It is the justification of sin rather than the sinner. It assumes that because Christ paid for our sins, we can continue living our lives unchanged.
- **Grace without discipleship** – It is grace sold in the market like cheap wares—forgiveness, the sacraments, and consolations are handed out at a discount without requiring a transformed life or true repentance.
- **Grace without the cross** – It is the religion of convenience where a person seeks comfort and cultural belonging rather than taking up their cross and following Jesus.

Bonhoeffer argued that “costly grace” is the essence of the Christian life. Its hallmarks include:

- **The treasure hidden in the field:** The parable teaching that to follow Christ is so valuable that a person will gladly sell everything they have to obtain it. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life.
- **Costly because it cost God everything** – The forgiveness of sins is not a simple loophole; it cost God the life of His Son.
- **Demands absolute obedience** – Bonhoeffer captured this with the famous sentiment, “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die”. It requires self-denial, the laying down of personal comforts, and a willingness to be completely transformed by Christ’s teachings.

April 9, 1945, at Flossenbürg concentration camp, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was executed by the Nazi regime for his involvement in the German resistance that conspired to assassinate Adolf Hitler and helped Jews escape the regime. Before his execution, he was stripped naked and led to the gallows. Accounts from witnesses, including the camp doctor, noted that he faced his death bravely and with composure. Kneeling to pray just moments before his execution, his final recorded words were, “This is the end—for me, the beginning of life”.

