

# THE TRIUMPHAL AND SACRIFICIAL KING

John 12:12-36



1. The King has come in  
humility. (12:12-19)

**Zechariah 9:9-10** Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

**Zechariah 9:9-10** <sup>10</sup> I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; And the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; And His dominion will be from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.

2. The hour has come for *self-sacrifice*. (12:20-36)

**Matthew 10:37-39** "He who loves father or mother **more than** Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter **more than** Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>38</sup> "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>39</sup> "He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life **for My sake** will find it.

**Mark 8:35-36** "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and **the gospel's** will save it. <sup>36</sup> "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?"

**Mark 10:43-44** "But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; <sup>44</sup> and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all."

**Mark 10:45** "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

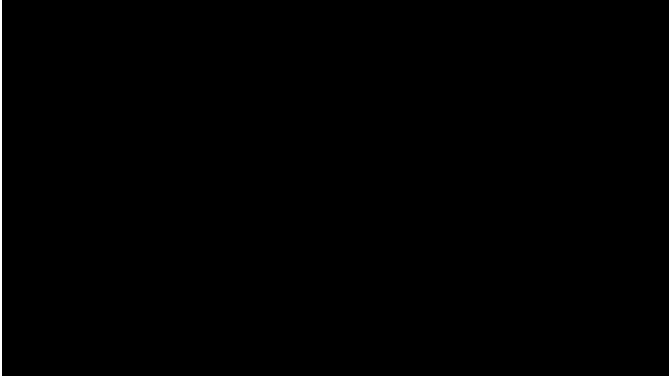
**Mark 14:33-36** And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. <sup>34</sup> And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch."

**Mark 14:33-36** <sup>35</sup> And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell to the ground and *began* to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. <sup>36</sup> And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will."

### 3. Applying the Word

a. What should your life look like if you *follow* the humble servant king?

b. How can you live for Christ and die to self in *everyday life* this week?



## The Triumphal and Sacrificial King

John 12:12-36

April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2026

1. The King has come in \_\_\_\_\_ . (12:12-19)

2. The hour has come for \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ .  
(12:20-36)

3. Applying the Word

a. What should your life look like if you \_\_\_\_\_  
the humble servant king?

b. How can you live for Christ and die to self in  
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## Questions for Discussion/Reflection on John 12:12-36

1. The scene in 12:12-19 draws on a prophecy in Zechariah. Read Zechariah 9:9-17 to get a sense for the expectations that were in people's minds as their "King of Israel" entered Jerusalem.
2. Why does Jesus consistently refer to His upcoming death as the time when He will be glorified? (vv. 23, 28)
3. How does this sentence about a grain of wheat illustrate what Jesus came to accomplish with his life, and how does it illustrate what must happen in the lives of all who follow Jesus?
4. In the context, what does it mean to love your life and therefore lose it rather than hating your life in this world? (v. 25) How does that fit with the verses that follow? How does the similar language in the following verses help explain it? (Matt. 10:37-39; 16:24-26; Luke 14:26; Rev. 12:11)
5. What are some practical ways that people can live for Christ and die to self in their everyday life?
6. John 12:28 gives one of three instances in Jesus' earthly ministry where a heavenly voice attests to his identity. Read Matthew 3:17 and 17:5 to note the other two instances. What is the significance of these three instances? In other words, why at these three junctures does a heavenly voice validate Jesus' identity and mission? How does John 12:30 add to the discussion?

Note: Some questions partially adapted from *Knowing the Bible: John* by Crossway.

## The Triumphal and Sacrificial King

John 12:12-36

April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Big idea: Jesus is the triumphal king who lays down His life.

### Intro

In 1977 in the capital city of the Central African Empire, there was a lavish coronation of the self-proclaimed Imperial Majesty, Bokassa the First.

Kent Hughes described the ceremony in detail.

The price tag for that one event, designed and choreographed by French designer Olivier Brice, was \$25 million, which was a third of the annual budget for the entire country. At 10:10 A.M. that morning the blare of trumpets and the roll of drums announced the approach of His Majesty. The procession began with eight of Bokassa's twenty-nine official children parading down the royal carpet to their seats. They were followed by Jean Bedel Bokassa II, heir to the throne, dressed in a white admiral's uniform with gold braid. He was seated on a red pillow to the left of the throne. Catherine followed, the favorite of Bokassa's nine wives. She was wearing a \$73,000 gown made by Lanvin of Paris, strewn with pearls she had picked out herself. The emperor had arrived in a gold eagle-bedecked imperial coach drawn by six matched Anglo-Norman horses. He wore a thirty-two-pound robe decorated with 785,000 strewn pearls and gold embroidery. On his brow he wore a gold crown of laurel wreaths, like those worn by Roman consuls of old, a symbol of the favor of the gods. As the "Sacred March" came to a conclusion, Bokassa seated himself in his \$2.5 million eagle throne, took his gold laurel wreath off, and, as Napoleon 173 years before had done, took his \$2.5 million crown, which was topped with an 80-carat diamond, and placed it upon his son's head.

Bokassa's reign was not as imposing as his coronation. Just two years later, while Bokassa was out of the country, the French engineered a successful coup. He had become greatly unpopular because of his repressive rule that led to food riots and a violent protest when he mandated that all students from elementary through college wear uniforms made by a company owned by one of his wives.

That ceremony and reign typify why many are opposed to monarchies – lavish, unnecessary spending and self-serving reigns.

Jesus is a different kind of king with a different kind of reign.

He entered Jerusalem not on a warhorse but on a donkey.

And He declared that the hour had come, not for a violent overthrow of the Romans and not for self-serving promotion, but to lay His life down. And then He calls us to sacrificial living as well.

1. The King has come in **humility**. (12:12-19)
  - a. I'll give less attention to this section because JO just preached on the Triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem a month ago on Palm Sunday.
  - b. The next day – Sunday
  - c. A large crowd –
    - i. Josephus, perhaps exaggerating a little, estimated 2.7 million Jews would take part in Passover – even if inflated, it was surely a massive number.
    - ii. Closest I can think of in our area in recent years was the crowds for the eclipse a few years ago. It was hard to travel on the freeway and backroads, everywhere was full
  - d. Palm branches

- i. Palm fronds used at the feast of Tabernacle also – but became part of the national symbol for Israel
  - ii. Palms appear on the coins struck by the insurgents during the Jewish wars adapted (Carson)
  - iii. That's when the crowd began to cry out
- e. They were shouting! Joyful, loud voices!
  - i. Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel!
    - 1. Psalm 118:26
    - 2. To come in the name of is to come in some sense representing him and to come in order to set forward his purposes. The crowds proclaim Jesus as God's representative, one who would set forward the divine purpose. (Morris).
  - ii. "Hosanna!" – Mark 11:9 and John 12:12 – May God save us!
- f. So why did Jesus ride in on a donkey?
  - i. He has been walking all over Israel for 3 years. He didn't suddenly need a break.
  - ii. See the whole passage in Zechariah 9, given 500 years before this moment. Zechariah is a minor prophet with major impact - quoted or alluded to more than 80 times in the NT.
  - iii. This is the triumphal entry of a king and these parades had customs – the king or important person should ride a horse – a symbol of power and victory in battle.
  - iv. **Zechariah 9:9-10** Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. <sup>10</sup> I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; And the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; And His dominion will be from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.
  - v. Three elements
    - 1. Rejoice, Jerusalem, for your king is coming
    - 2. The king comes gently, in peace.
      - a. He does not come to make war, but to remove the instruments of war – chariots, war horses, and battle bows.
      - b. Humble, gentle – not because he lacks power and authority, but because He is using that power and authority to serve.
      - c. He could ride in and crush the opposition. He could use those miracle working powers to rally the crowd. But he doesn't.
    - 3. The king brings salvation, for his reign will extend from sea to sea
  - vi. On the other hand, the riding in on a donkey is the act of a king.
    - 1. It's a king with nothing left to prove. He doesn't need to boast of his victory or convince people to submit to his rule.

2. As far back the 2,000 years before Christ in Ancient Near Eastern culture kings rode on donkeys.
  3. It's the cross not the colt that makes him a strange kind of king.
- g. The disciples didn't understand all of this at the time.
- i. But later, after His death, resurrection, and ascension, they remembered and realized.
  - ii. Jesus told the disciples in John 14:26 that the HS would bring to their remembrance all that He said to them.
  - iii. Can't you picture them sitting around a fire, months later, the terror of that week past, their own failings and abandonment of Jesus forgiven although maybe still with a little pain and shame, reminiscing about these events.
    1. Someone brings up the palm branches and the donkey and how it was exciting and kind of confusing – but then it dawns on them – that's Psalm 118! That's Zechariah 9!
- h. As the Pharisees feared, the world appears to be going after Jesus.
- i. **John 11:47-48** Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. <sup>48</sup> "If we let Him *go on* like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."
    1. Which is why they made a plan to kill him.
2. The hour has come for **self-sacrifice**. (12:20-36)
- a. The Greeks are an example of "the world" that has gone after Him.
    - i. These Greek were likely "God fearers" who were in Jerusalem for the feast.
  - b. Their request is to "see Jesus" – which in the context means to have an interview with Him.
    - i. Pulled out often as a great request to make of a pastor – sir, we wish to see Jesus – that's what the sermon should do, help us see Jesus.
    - ii. We don't know whether He met with them.
    - iii. His answer has to do with what is next – not more meetings with people or endless debates or pointed teaching to the masses.
  - c. The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.
    - i. **John 2:4** And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come."
    - ii. **John 7:30** So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.
    - iii. **John 8:20** These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.
    - iv. From here on in John the "hour" is at hand, the hour is here
    - v. **John 13:1** Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.
    - vi. **John 17:1** Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You,

- d. He will be like a seed that is thrown into the ground, apparently dead, and yet springing to life with great fruitfulness. (v. 24)
  - i. He dies to save and rises to prove it.
  - ii. The much fruit that He bears is us, the people who are saved by His death and resurrection.
    - 1. He's a sacrificial king.
- e. In a similar but not identical way, those who serve Him must follow Him. (vv. 25ff)
  - i. He did not preserve His life above all things, but laid it down to save.
  - ii. Likewise, we should not love our lives above all things.
  - iii. What does it mean to love your life and lose it vs. hating your life in this world and keeping it to life eternal?
  - iv. There is a sense in which I love my life
    - 1. I love where I live in southeast Idaho with access to the mountains and rivers. I love my family and enjoy being with them. I feel privileged to be my children's father. I love this church and I love serving this church. I love to read thoughtful books and I'm glad I have margin for that in my life. I love walking through our backyard and seeing the spring growth. Is that what Jesus is talking about? I don't think so.
    - 2. That's enjoying God's goodness in this world and recognizing it as a gift from Him.
  - v. Consider similar passages where Jesus teaches on similar themes. It was a repeated talking point for Him in different ways.
    - 1. **Matthew 10:37-39** "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>38</sup> "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>39</sup> "He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.
    - 2. **Mark 8:35-36** "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. <sup>36</sup> "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?
      - a. The approval of Christ should be more precious to us than the approval of our family.
      - b. To follow Him is to take up our cross, which is to march toward death – no longer living for ourselves but for Christ.
      - c. But ironically, it is in this that we save our lives – we get life to the full, as Jesus taught in John 10.
      - d. To love our life is to live merely for the moment with our own pleasure on the throne of our hearts rather than Christ on the throne.
    - 3. John Piper: Notice that he adds "in this world." Hating your life in this world means that you will choose to do things that look foolish to the world. You will deny yourself things, and take risks, and embrace the path of suffering for the sake of love. This, Jesus says, will lead to eternal life, not death.
    - 4. **Mark 10:43-44** "But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; <sup>44</sup> and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all.

5. **Mark 10:45** "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

a. We live this when we choose to forgive someone when it feels costly, when a dad engages with his kids after work rather than retreats, when a teenager befriends a lonely kid

f. He was troubled but intentional and committed (vv. 27ff)

i. The impending hour of His death was a weighty thing, but He was not swayed away from it by the hardship. He knows He came for this purpose and it will glorify the Father.

ii. And yet it doesn't mean it was easy.

iii. In Mark's account in the garden of Gethsemane before He was arrested we see Christ's anguish at the coming cross.

1. **Mark 14:33-36** And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. <sup>34</sup> And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch." <sup>35</sup> And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell to the ground and *began* to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. <sup>36</sup> And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will."

a. He was distressed, troubled, deeply grieved.

b. He asked that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by, and yet He commits to the Father's will.

iv. The Father's voice spoke audibly for now the third recorded time in the gospels – the first was at Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3 and the second was at His transfiguration in Matthew 17.

1. Jesus says that this voice is for their sakes – it affirms and confirms the intentional work of the Father and Son to save through the cross.

2. As He is lifted up to the cross, He will draw "all men" to Himself, not merely Jews but as the context sets up this interaction after the Greeks asked to see Him, He will draw Jews and Gentiles/Greeks.

v. The crowd is confused because they have celebrated Him as the triumphal Messianic king and they believed He must therefore "remain forever." How can He die? (v. 34)

1. They were still missing that the Messiah would die for the people before He reigns.

3. Applying the Word

a. What should your life look like if you **follow** the humble servant king?

i. More concerned about the glory of God than getting your own way.

b. How can you live for Christ and die to self in **everyday life** this week?