

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

May 6, 2018

SPEAKER

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SERIES

PLANT

PART

4

TITLE

Planting In Hope

SCRIPTURE

John 12:24-26



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So the ideas in that video actually flow out of a verse right here in John chapter 12. That verse that we're going to read is actually verse 24, but I want to give you context, and so what we're going to do is start reading up in verse 12. And so John chapter 12, verse 12 says this, it says, "The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, so they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel!'"

And so what we know here is that the context of where this passage flows out of is what we celebrate as Palm Sunday, when Jesus entered into Jerusalem just five days before he gave his life in order to ransom us, in order to save us from our sin.

Now look at verse 20, we're going to skip down just a little bit, and it says, "Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and ask him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' And Philip went and told Andrew, and Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus, and Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 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. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.'"

And to give just a picture of the emotional heaviness of what's taking place, let's just read one more verse, verse 27. "Jesus says, 'Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.'" And so I want to show you three truths here, and there we're going to look at a few applications, and then we're going to take the Lord's supper together.

The first truth is this, is that Jesus designed the law of the harvest. Now this is really important, he's going to speak about it and explain it, but what that law is simply this, is that unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone or unfruitful, it doesn't multiply. But if it does die, it bears much fruit. What you have to understand, Providence family, is this, is that Jesus not only explains this principle in this law of nature, but Jesus designed it himself. We're told in the Bible, it says that for ... by him, by him all things were created in the heavens and in the earth. It was all created for him and all created for his glory.

Now, I want you just to consider, you see, you and I, we just eat food. We eat bread, [inaudible 00:04:20] it comes from grain, and we just eat it, and we know, at least theoretically, what takes place on the surface, that there's something that takes place when seeds go into the ground, eventually little shoots pop up and they have little fruit, we take the fruit and then we make food out of it and think, "This is just a wonderful thing."

But if you look behind the scenes at how God created something that was so intricate and how he designed it, it will make you smile. Just consider for a moment what this picture looks like, those of you who've ever held a seed, planted a seed in the ground. It seems like such a simple thing, a little seed, so little capacity within it. It feels that way, and yet imagine what is actually there. We're told, right, that every single seed has an embryo, and inside that embryo is embedded a root, a shoot, and literally an on/off switch.

And so when a seed, a physical seed, is planted into the soil, and it's planted into the soil for a right amount of time at the right temperature, suddenly the switch turns on. That's called a miracle. You eat because of a miracle. And then this is what happens, once the switch turns on, the seed then takes on water. It then dies to its original seed nature, it begins to produce sugar and protein, so much so that that root and that shoot begin to grow. That root digs down into the ground, the shoot, just like this picture, it starts shooting up into the air, and eventually that shoot produces fruit, and each one of the fruits has seeds that can be put back into the ground to replicate the process again and again and again.

However, if the seed is not planted, if it stays in the bag, or if the seed is planted but it's not planted in soil, it's planted on concrete, then the seed never switches from off to on. It never takes in water, it never sends down a root, it never sends up a shoot, and so there's absolutely no fruit, which is why Jesus says "It remains alone."

What I want you to see, first of all, just ... you think about seeds and you think about the law of harvest that we all take for granted, is that it was Jesus Christ who created and designed this miracle, and then he did something more and even greater. This is the second thing I want you to see, is that Jesus demonstrates this law by planting his own life. By planting his own life.

Now think about this for a second, okay? It's so important to grasp this principle of the harvest, this law of the harvest, and to understand what's taking place in John chapter 12. Those of you who have ever been to the state fair on canned food day, okay, you understand something about Passover in Jerusalem. It's like this picture, it is absolutely slam packed with people. There are people everywhere. Jesus comes in riding on a donkey, a colt, and it says that he comes in five days before his death, and verse 23 says that he knew his hour had come. It was time. It was time to do his most significant work and accomplish his most significant deed while he was here.

And in this mass of humanity, what we're told is that there's some Greeks, there's some Greeks that had come up to the feast, and they want a private viewing of Jesus. So they go up to Philip. Now we don't know why they went to Philip other than Philip is actually a Greek name, maybe they heard his name was Philip and he says, "Hey, maybe that's a natural in. We're Greeks, he has a Greek name, maybe he can give us a private viewing, a little showtime with Jesus."

He doesn't know what to do, so he goes over to his buddy Andrew and he says, "Hey Andrew, there's some Greeks over here, and they want to hang out with Jesus, have a little time with him. What should we do? Should we sort of organize that?" Andrew goes, "Well, I don't know, let's go ask Jesus." So Philip and Andrew, they go over to Jesus and they say, "Well, so, Jesus, look, there's some Greeks, they've come, they'd really love to be able to see you. Are you up for that?"

And suddenly, Jesus, almost as if he's ignoring the current situation, but he's not, he begins speaking, and he says, "Philip, Andrew, I want you to know something. Now, now is my hour. It's come right now." And then he links his hour to the law of the harvest, and he says, "Now is the time, but unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it's planted and dies, it'll bear much fruit."

So what is happening here? What's occurring? What Jesus is saying is this, he's saying, "Guys, listen to me. If I leave my determined path so that a few people can see me ... I can do this the rest of my life, there'll be people that want private viewings for the rest of my life and theirs. And if I do that, then I will remain like a seed in the bag. The switch of my capacity to be able to redeem and save all the multitudes that will come and believe in me, it'll never be turned from off to on. But if I, like a seed, am planted into the ground, if I die to my original nature, to myself, to this body, and I'm buried in the ground, I'll bear much fruit.

You see, all those that will believe in me and repent of their sin, they will become like shoots that grow from me and then bear fruit, and ever single one of their fruits has a seed that could be planted back into the ground, so that it could replicate the process, so that more people would see, and more people would know, and more people would understand, and more people would come and believe and be forgiven of their sin."

And so what Jesus is doing here is so significant. Think about the continuity of our creator and our savior, Jesus Christ, he designs a law in nature that feeds us every day, and then he applies that law spiritually, and he plays it out to save us from all of our sin. He says, "This is the law by which you eat, and this is the law by which you will be saved. Someone has to plant their life in the ground, a perfect one, for you."

What I want you to understand, friends, is that you have something personally at stake in your life and your future that Jesus Christ came to this earth. There is something personally at stake for you that Jesus died on a cross, that he was buried like a seed in the ground, and that he rose from the dead. The reason that you have something personally at stake is because you and I both have the same need, and that is that every single person on the earth has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and the wage of sin is death.

God looked at us and he knew he wanted a relationship with us, he loved us, and so he made a promise, to send a rescuer, and then he made good on his promise by sending his own son. He demonstrated his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. For you, for me. And if you believe in him, and repent of your sin, primarily the sin of believing you can save yourself, of trusting in your own righteousness, and repenting of that, saying, "I cannot save myself. I must trust in him." It says that you will literally shoot up from Christ, that you will abide in him, and suddenly all of his life, and all of his love, and all of his sincerity, and all of his compassion has the capacity now to shoot through you like a branch connected to a vine, so that you can bear fruit for his glory and for the good of the people around you.

This is his plan. And so here we find the savior of the world, he not only designs the law of the nature, but then by his own body, he applies that law of nature in order to save us from our sin.

But there's another point you need to see, and that is that Jesus calls us, and when I speak of the word "us," I'm talking of those who have believed in Jesus Christ, who have trusted, who have connected to him, that Jesus calls us to trust him enough to plant our lives. That's why he starts talking about, "If you're with me, you'll follow me, you'll imitate me, you'll do what I'm doing." What did he do? He planted his life. He died to himself. He gave up his rights. He humbled himself so that we could be blessed.

So the truth that Jesus designed and then demonstrated, he now directs at us, and he begins using at first very harsh language, in verse 25. He says, "He who loves his life must lose his life, and whoever hates his life in this world shall keep it to eternal life." Does Jesus really want you to hate yourself? The answer is no. I believe this is what he means here. There's a really cool little parable, it's Matthew chapter 13 verse 44, and this is what it says, it says that "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that's hidden in a field which a man found and covered up, and then is his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

Now this is that thing, what he's saying. You see, just like today, there must have been critics at that point in time that if indeed this took place, they would ask these questions: "Why in the world would you be selling everything that you have with a smile on your face, it looks like you're joyful in doing this, to go buy that field? That dirty, dusty field with no crops? There's nothing in it." You see, they don't see the treasure. They don't recognize what you're doing is a trade up, they look at it as a trade down. "Wait, you're sacrificing your time and your energy and your resources for that field?" You see, until they see the treasure, there's no way to be able to appreciate, and so what'll happen is this: sometimes, the level of our self denial for the sake of the kingdom, for the sake of the gospel, it can appear to people who have never seen the treasure as self hatred.

"Don't you appreciate your time? Don't you appreciate the money that you ... you'd be throwing of your time and your resources and your abilities to go and do that?" This is what he's saying. Jesus is saying to live in such a way that other people who do not see the treasure in the field, they look at it and go, "She must hate herself, I don't know, I don't know why she would be doing that. She must not appreciate the value of a dollar, or the value of her time, or the value of his abilities, whatever it is."

You see, the same thing can be said today. Maybe some of you have even ... it's been told of you, or asked of you, "Wait, you're going to take vacation time to go on a mission trip? Don't you appreciate your accrued vacation time? That's like for the beach. Wait a minute, you're going to leave the party tonight so that you can get home, because you say you need to rise up early in the morning to pray? To pray?"

This is what Jesus is talking about, is that the one who designed the law of the harvest and demonstrated, he calls to it as well, and he says, "Now listen, as shoots that are growing off of me, you're supposed to imitate my life." Which is why he says, "If anyone serves me, let him follow me, and if anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."

Yet I ask the question, why would Jesus, at this moment, add a promise? Why would he add a promise at this very moment? I believe it's for this reason: he knows planting feels risky. Any time you plant, what you're doing is you're taking what you have, you're placing it in the ground, you're going to lose it, and you're doing so without any guarantee of exactly what's going to take place. You give your time, you plant it, your precious time and your precious resources, your precious ability, your precious prayers, you planted them in the ground, and you don't really know what's going to happen.

Problem is, this is why planting requires imagination. You have to be able to close your eyes, and you have to be able to see what would take place if I actually planted the seed into the ground. What would take place in my church, what would take place in my marriage, what would take place in my school, what would take place in my friendships if I planted these kinds of seeds in the ground? If you don't have the imagination to see, you won't plant.

And so three applications for us. The first is this, is Providence, let's imagine what faithfulness could yield. Imagine for a moment what faithfulness could yield. See, our hands, they will not plant until our heart can see what God might do with the seeds. And Jesus himself, the king of glory, our savior and Lord, the designer of the law of the harvest, even he had an imagination of what would take place. Hebrews chapter 12 verse two says it this way, he says, "Guys, look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross." You see what he's saying? While he's going to the cross, he's closing his eyes and he's imagining the other side of the cross, when he rises from the dead, and you believe in him and are forgiven of your sin.

He could see this seed going into the ground is going to produce salvation for so many, and so imagination propelled planting. The same thing happens in our life, you see, this I know about life, and that is that every need we have, there's a corresponding seed. If you need friends in your life, you need to plant the seed of time and effort into others. If your marriage needs trust, you need to plant the seeds of integrity and communication in that relationship. If you need to be able to understand God's will for your life, then you need to be able to plant seeds of time and God's word, and time with other believers, asking them wisdom. Time and prayer with God.

There's a need and there's a seed, and for so many of us, isn't it true that for so many of us we just wait on God? What if the planter just waited on God? Didn't plant any seeds, the farmer, he just said, "I don't know, I'm just hoping that God supernaturally just causes cotton to grow." No! We plant. You see, we may be waiting for God ... you ever thought that God might be waiting for you? "Plant the seed and see what I'll do. Close your eyes and imagine what I'll do in your marriage, in your school, in your relationships, in the church and in the world."

So let's stretch our imagination to be able to see. You see, this is true not only at the personal level, but also at the corporate level. When I mean corporate, I mean our corporate assembly, when we gather together, more than one people, we all come together and we're one. We too need to imagine what would take place. You see, as the church family, we exist to glorify God by introducing all peoples to Jesus Christ and growing them up to love and worship him. We invite every single person to be a part of a growth path in order to accomplish that mission, and it says that we are all to be connecting and growing and serving and going.

And then routinely, what we did last year, one year ago, we introduced a three year vision to help us walk and walk down this path in unison, and it's called Plant. We want to do three things, we're going to plant three seeds. We want to plant our lives in the Church, we want to plant the gospel in our city, and we want to plant churches in the world. Once a year, in May, this is what we're doing right now, we normally have what's called Master Plan Sunday, where we share, "Hey, this is what we're going to try to do the next year."

This year I wanted to change it up just a little bit, and so when you walked in, a tool was placed in your hand. If it wasn't, please get one on the way out, it looks just like this. What we did this year was instead of saying, "This is what we're going to do," this becomes now an invitation for you to imagine. What I'm asking you to do is literally take a few moments, maybe just a few moments a day, and do one question at a time. You open it up, and you look at "Planting our lives in the Church," and you ask this question, can you see a new worship center full of God's people worshipping? That would gather to passionately worship God, be encouraged and challenged through the scriptures and practice love and care in community and with other believers?

Then just close your eyes and imagine what it could look like. What would it look like if we had a vision? Not a vision on a piece of paper, there are a few people say, "Hey, this is our vision," but what if we collectively imagined what it could look like?

The second thing I want you to see, or the second application is this, is let's be encouraged as we continue to plant. To be encouraged means to look backwards, it's to look back at the last year. Not only as a church, but even maybe in our friendships or our own life, there's been things that you have been looking to do, there's been seeds that you've planted, whether it's in your finances or whether it's in your marriage or friendships or at work. You look back, and even if it's a difficult year, you can look back and hopefully see some tangible evidences of grace, of how God literally worked in your life, and you see those evidences of grace, they're supposed to be the fuel that propels us to continue to plant more seeds.

The same thing is true even as a church family. You think about what we are trying to plant, I just want to give you a few things. When we look at planting our lives in the Church, it just does my heart so much good when I look at a strong life group structure, and I look out and I actually see that there's over a thousand people at Providence that actually have an active ministry role in one of the ministries at Providence. It is a remarkable thing to see. I cannot believe it. It's stunning.

I look at your service, I look at your sacrifice, I look at your praying, when we have a prayer and worship night, there's some of the sweetest nights, God has blessed us so much during that time. I look at your giving this year, I look at how God has literally encouraged us to provide for everything that we need and more so. My hope is simply that we would take that and take that encouragement to say, "Hey, let's keep planting."

When we think about planting the gospel in our city, it does my heart so good to hear life groups having conversations, "Hey, has anyone had the opportunity to share the gospel this week?" and to tell those stories. It does my heart so good to hear stories even of people who come and they say, "Man, my son shared Christ with a friend, and the friend didn't take it so well, and I was wondering if he did it right." All right? Not everyone is going to respond to the seed with as much affection as we have for the seed, because not everyone can see the treasure. And so I would just encourage you, continue to excel some more.

The third one is to plant churches in the world. We've planned 18 mission trips this year, nearly every one of them are totally full. We're on pace, because of your generosity and because of sacrifice in other areas, to actually increase our mission's giving, meaning money that goes to help other people and to help other people to know Jesus Christ, over 20% of the budget at the end of next year will actually be designated for what we would call missions. It's because of you. We are now supporting six North American church planters, and 19 church planters in the nations.

It's because of you, God has been so faithful to work in our lives as we have planted. One of the other things that we wanted to see and be a part of is that God would allow us to have our hands directly in planting two churches. We weren't sure how that was going to take place, we thought for sure that the planters would be somewhere outside of Providence and we'd bring them in and then we'd launch them out, lo and behold God had two individuals sitting right here in our midst, indeed, even on our staff.

I'm going to ask them to come up now, Daniel Moore and Thomas West, to share what the Lord has done in their lives, what God is calling them to. What I want you to see is in the context of what we've just talked about in John 12, I want you to see two individuals, two families that are very much like a seed that's being planted into the ground in the hopes that'll be much fruit. So, Daniel, how about it?

Daniel Moore:

Providence family, we are so excited. In 55 days, my wife, my three kiddos and myself are moving to Portland, Oregon on a new adventure to help plant and pastor a church there. Last year when we started this plant vision, I can remember sitting at my kitchen table with my wife, and we talked about how we were all in on this vision for the three areas we wanted to plant, but little did we know that God would use our exceptionally ordinary and average family to be a part of answering God's collective prayers around here to see a new church planted in a place where Jesus isn't as famous as this city.

I was first exposed to Portland, Oregon about three years ago through a partnership that we have in the city, and I fell in love. The culture of Portland is really beautiful, from the nature to the food, industry, the culture there is really bright, but for as bright as it is, Portland is also a place of great darkness. It's the least religiously affiliated city in America. 2.6 million people call Portland home, and 70% of those wouldn't say that they have any religious interest at all. It's a hub for human trafficking, there are more porn and strip clubs per capita in Portland than in Las Vegas. If God is going to transform the city of Portland to look more like heaven than hell, it's going to take power and a miracle.

But family, we believe that Jesus has already proven he's powerful enough to overcome any obstacle. His love is so great that he won't leave any of the people who bear his image alone, he proved that when he stretched out his arms on the cross. Our church in the city, Kaleo Communities, we want to see every neighborhood, every street, have the opportunity to encounter Jesus every day through average, ordinary people like us. We're a family of servant missionaries that wants to see the city called into the reign of Jesus. So 55 days from now, we're packing up and we're moving to see that happen. I'll be the second pastor at Kaleo, responsible for leading worship through music, equipping small group leaders, and seeing the prayer of Jesus come true where he said, "God, let your kingdom come and will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Providence family, we love you, and the last five years have been everything to us, and we're secretly praying that many of you would follow us on the Oregon trail. Pastor Brian will talk about you can get involved in a minute.

Thomas West:

Providence family, it's with mixed emotions that Elizabeth and I sense God leading us to London, England to plant a church. We plan to move over in June of 2019, and just for a few moments, allow for me to share with you how we got to this moment, what we intend to do, and what some of our next steps will probably be.

We would not be here today if it weren't for the life and ministry of this church. We got to this point in our hearts largely because of the preaching of this church, the leadership of this church, and the overall culture of this place that we get to call home. Specifically in the last five years, God has marked my life with a deep desire to see churches planted in urban environments through leading our college students on mission trips around North America and around the world. Specifically five years ago when I went to Toronto with a small group of college students here from Providence, God impressed my heart in a special way that hasn't left me since.

Just three years ago, my wife Elizabeth and I were touring around London as I was conducting research for my dissertation on the British missionary and theologian Lesslie Newbigin, and in our time there, we started falling in love with the people of London and the country at large. In the days since then, God has really brought all of this to focus in our hearts through the Plant vision here at Providence. As we as a church family have been praying that God would help us plant two churches somewhere in the world, we as the West family have been wrestling as to whether God would have us be those people who get planted.

So I came to Pastors Brian and John earlier this fall, shared what God was stirring in our hearts, the elders and the executive team of pastors entered into a process where on and off for the last seven months, we've been praying and thinking about what it would look like for the West family to be sent out from Providence to be church planters in the city of London, a city of great need, a city that's home to some 11 million people, all of which are in desperate need of the love of Jesus Christ. We endeavor to go and to share that love with them.

To give you an idea of the importance of this city strategically within the world, one out of every 100 Londoners would claim some affiliation with Christianity, while one of every 10 would claim some affiliation with Islam. It's an incredibly diverse place, and it's a place in need of the gospel, so we hope to go and to share it with them. Some time in the next year I'll transition to a role of full time support raising, vision casting, and team building, ultimately preparing my family and hopefully a small team of people here from Providence to move over to London to plant a church that will impact the nations.

So Providence, I just want to say thank you. Thank you for loving my family so well, thank you for this privilege to steward ministry with you for the last six and a half years. There are many ways that you can support us as well as the Moores, and Pastor Brian will share more about that in just a moment. I want to leave you with this: I believe the essence of discipleship is hearing the voice of Jesus and responding in obedience. Here in this last season for my wife Elizabeth and I and our family, we sense God telling us to go, and we want to be found faithful and obedient to that. My question to you would be, what is God calling you to in the Plant vision here at Providence?

We covet your prayers, and we look forward to your support. Thank you.

Brian Frost:

Thanks guys.

Some would look at Thomas, Daniel, and their families and interpret what they just said as self hatred. To leave a place of comfort and support and friendship and family, and to pick up and to leave and go to a place. The only way you do that is if you see the treasure in the field, right? So I want to encourage us as a church family, we as a church will be ... we will be there with them, we as a church, we're going to support them, but if you want to do that personally, if you want to talk with them about what it might look like for you to help them, for you to pray for them, for you maybe even to give to them, or for you to move. I hear London's beautiful these days, and so is Portland. Then be in prayer for that. I asked them to come up, because I wanted for you to hear from them, but also to see their faces, if you would indeed want to talk with them.

The third and last application leads us to the Lord's supper, and it's this, is let's look to Jesus and find hope. We have somebody how has gone before us, who has modeled the way of self sacrifice for the good of others. The cross serves as a reminder that we can trust God, that he's for us and not against us, and he's given us this amazing, amazing gift called the Lord's supper that we're going to actually celebrate right now to remember him.

For those that will be serving us, if you want to go ahead and stand up and head to the back. This supper has two elements, there's bread, which is symbolic of the body of Christ, and there's a cup, which is symbolic of the blood of Jesus Christ that was shed so that we could be forgiven of our sin. Jesus told us never to take this unless we intend to do two things as we're going it. One is to remember exactly what he has done for us, and then second is for us to proclaim with our own lives that we believe what he did for us and we're staking our life to it.

And so if you have never trusted Christ, we ask you just to let these things pass, but if you know Christ as your savior and Lord, we welcome you to the table. I'm going to pray and then we'll be served, and as we're served, I would encourage you to take those moments to pray and ask God to forgive you of your sin so that we can take this with a clean conscience, okay? Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, thank you. Thank you for this morning, and thank you for the gift of your life that was planted so that we could be saved. We pray, God, that you would use this moment, Lord, to purify our heart. Would you work in us, Lord, stir up gratitude in our heart now, I pray, in Christ's name, amen.



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