

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

December 4, 2016

SPEAKER

Brian Frost

SERIES

Fully Alive

PART

33

TITLE

We Wish To See Jesus

SCRIPTURE

John 12:12-26



© 2016 Providence Baptist Church (Raleigh, NC)

Sermon transcripts may be used for preaching and teaching purposes, but may not be published or sold. While generally accurate, parts of this transcript may contain errors.

Providence reserves the right to correct and/or remove a transcript at any time.

Providence, good morning. I hope that you are encouraged this morning with the reality of that He's worthy, and that we really can know Him, and we can love Him. I want to ask you to turn with me to John chapter 12. If you don't have one with you, there is one in the chair near you, and if you don't have one at home, please take that Bible home with you. We would love for you to have that as a gift. We're in John chapter 12. In fact, we'll be in John for two more weeks, this Sunday and next, and then the last two Sundays of the month, we're going to look at Advent. But it's always a joy to be here with you, love God's Word. We love God's Word here at Providence, and if you're a guest, welcome, we're thrilled that you're here, and I hope that you know that of us, is that we believe that the Bible is the Word of God, and we gladly sit under it and not over it. We believe it's the authority and not us, and so it really is a joy to read it with you.

But I want to ask you, if you would, let's bow and let's pray together. Father, Your Word is a gift, and we thank You for it, and as we prepare to read John chapter 12, some of these verses, we pray, Father, for Your spirit, God, to work in our lives. We pray for that gift that You would allow us to believe what we read, that You would give us understanding to know how to think it, think of it, and to know how to truly practice it, and to put it into practice into our life.

We are so grateful, Lord, that You inspired John to write these things down. We thank You, God, that You kept these memories of his time with Jesus so fresh that even 50 years after the fact, that he could write with such clarity. We're just so grateful, God, that we have a copy of it that has been preserved all the way down today, Lord, translated into a language that we can understand, and we're grateful. And so I pray, God, that You would speak through weakness, and that You would use this text to address our hearts, and to help us to see and to really understand, Lord, the identity and the mission, and even the demands of Jesus over His followers. And so we ask for help, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Well, I love to watch people. I love to watch people watch people also; it's sort of an interesting thing. There's something about all of sociology that has always just sort of appealed to me, of why do we do the things that we do. We've been created in the image of God; I think when we look at how we do things, that it really gives us some portrait — it's not always accurate — of who God is, and what God is like. It's interesting to me as I look at people, as we look at our culture, I find it really fascinating. It's almost this unknown, just fascination that we have with celebrities. We don't know why; we just love celebrities.

We're not necessarily taught to love them, or to think about them, or to read about them, or to follow them, and yet we do, in each of our lives. I think for some of it, it's perhaps envy, where we look at their life, and we wonder what it must be like to have that much money, or to have the world kind of think that you're amazing, and we think, "Man, it would be so cool if I could be that, if I could be like them." I think for some, it's sympathy. We look at all the celebrities, and we find our favorites, right? And so we like to root for them over all of the other celebrities, and there's just this natural sympathy, I think, that draws on our hearts towards certain people that are in that sphere.

I think there's some of it that's an affirmation of our need of rescue. Now, we would never come out and say those words, but I think that when we look into the mirror, and when we think about our life, we look at our life as rather mundane, dull, perhaps, and we wonder what it would be like. And we know that we probably are not going to become that kind of celebrity, and so maybe we could just kind of live through them and be thinking about what life would really be like.

And so, as a result of this, it's interesting, we watch their award shows. I want you to think about how odd that really is, right? Let's just say that you and your family, you had an award show, like Best Kid of the Year, right? And you were convinced that the rest of the culture would really want to know who you thought was the best kid in your family that year, and so you, like, called up ABC and CBS, "Hey, you know, we have this amazing award show once a year in our family. Would you like ...?" No, of course we ... No one would care. Why? Well, because we're not celebrities.

And yet we'll watch people give each other awards. It's the same family, and they're just trading awards. And we'll look at them, and we're like, "Oh, that's so cool." We have to see this, because it's so important to us. We read their headlines. Every time we buy something, right, food, we're like, "Well, we have to go to the check-out." If you think about everything that we could put at the checkout that would be profitable for humanity, and we choose Brad Pitt's marriages, and all these things, we're like, "Well, how is this celebrity doing, and what's going on ... You know, some of this stuff I know is sketchy, but gosh, that really is a compelling headline. I wonder if that's really true."

We love to, for some reason, follow their headlines. We'll show up early at their events, or stay late in the hopes that we're going to ask one of these normal people just like you and me to write their name, either on a piece of paper that we have, or perhaps on our forehead, or on our back, or on our hand. Like, "If you could just write your name and let me have your signature, that would be meaningful to me." Have you ever thought about how odd that is? These people are just people just like you and me.

And it's interesting that for some people, we'll cry at their concerts. I want to show you this picture, okay? Now, these people are happy, right? This is ... They've been waiting for this. This is a meaningful moment in their life. They got Justin Bieber's initials on their cheek, and what's interesting is you don't have to wait for our current culture to see things like this. I went back and I was looking for pictures, and I saw black and white, right, and I see Beatles, I'm like, "Oh, I get that," and, I mean, people are literally sobbing. I saw one that they had these huge cameras back then, they're like this, like personal cameras, they're like this big, you know, and they're just sobbing for the Osmonds. I'll be honest with you, I don't know who the Osmonds are. I'm just looking at it and I'm like, "Who are they so uptight about?" They're happy about this. They're all happy.

And it's interesting that when we get near them, we may get so nervous that we get to the point where we can't even talk to them because we're so flustered, and yet we really want to see them. It's a fascinating thing, and something similar to that is happening here in John chapter 12. The city is abuzz, it is absolutely overpacked with people that have come to celebrate Passover. And they have word, in fact, word has spread like wildfire all over the city of Jerusalem that Jesus Christ rose Lazarus from the dead just a few days prior to. There was a crowd that was there, and they saw Lazarus, and they come back, and all of a sudden now this is going all about.

And we're told in John chapter 11 verse 56 that everybody was asking the same question, and it was this question: "Are we going to be able to see Him? Are we going to be able to put our eyes and actually see this person that seems bigger than all other people?" It's a fascinating thing, and what we find here in this passage that we normally think about as Palm Sunday, right, when Jesus enters Jerusalem the last time, five days before He goes to the cross, what we find is not only that we're going to read of His entrance, but we're going to learn that what He wants us to understand about His identity, about His mission from heaven to the earth, but also His demands for us, for those who would say, "I want to follow and believe upon Jesus Christ."

Let's read it as a family of faith, starting in verse 12 of chapter 12. 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 Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, 'Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!' His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. So the Pharisees said to one another, 'You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.'"

"Now among those who had went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from the city of Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' Philip went and told Andrew, and he went with Philip, and they 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, but 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.'"

I want to show you, as we get ready for the Lord's Supper this morning, I want to show you three truths that we find here about Jesus Christ, and how pertinent they are to our personal lives today. The first is that Jesus came as the promised King of the world, the promised King of the world. We're told in verse 12 that when the crowd heard that Jesus was coming, they went out to make a red carpet. And we're told in Matthew chapter 21 that they even took off their cloak, their coat, and they put those on the ground, and then we read here that they cut palm branches, and they laid them down in order to give a royal welcome to this Jesus Christ as he came.

And then it's interesting that they began to shout things, and what they're shouting here is they're actually quoting a psalm, Psalm 118, that speaks of the coming Messiah who would come into the world and eventually even come into Jerusalem. And they say, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" In fact, I want to show you, this is Psalm 118, this is where they get this. Now, you don't see that first word, "hosanna," because we've translated it, and that means "save us." It means "save us now." "Hosanna, we pray, O Lord, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Now, just like words change their meaning in English over time, right, there's some words that back in the '40s and '50s, we used words that we don't necessarily use today, or when we do use them, they have very different meanings. Well, "hosanna" kind of morphed with time as well. At first, "hosanna" was used as a plea of need, like if you fell out of a boat and you couldn't swim, you'd say, "Save me, hosanna." That's what it meant, "Save me, I have a need. Someone please come." But what's interesting is Psalm 118 immediately answers the need with the solution by saying, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." In other words, the guy falls out of the boat, he's flopping around in the water, but he looks up and he sees a lifeguard, and so now he can say, "Salvation is come." And this is what is happening here, and this is sort of the morph of this word "hosanna."

It might help to think of it in terms of our favorite sport around here, basketball, okay? Let's just say that your team is up by one point, and the other team has the basketball, and there's only about 10 seconds left, and they run this incredible motion offense, and all of a sudden, the point guard is really, really fast. He gets a great screen, he rolls around it, and all of a sudden, he has a clear lane all the way to the rim, and the first impulse you have is, "Save us! This is going to go bad really quickly." But all of a sudden, the power forward slips off his man, comes over, and blocks the shot off the backboard in order to win the game, and now you can say, "He saved us."

And this is what's happening here. "Hosanna" means "Save us, I have a need." "Blessed be the name of the Lord who comes," this is the solution, and this is what's happening here in Jerusalem. "Save us" is being swallowed up by "Salvation is come." Now, you would think, perhaps, if you read all the way through John, this isn't the first time that people have called Him King and wanted to make Him King. We saw this in John chapter 6. He made a great meal for 5,000 people, it was free, and they said, "You should be King."

And Jesus, at that moment, He withdrew from His coronation, but it's interesting here, what Jesus does is He actually does something intentionally in order to add fuel to this fire.

What He does, Matthew chapter 1 ... Chapter 21, actually, says that He intentionally did this. John tells us that He rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. Well, Matthew 21 says that He sent two disciples to go get that donkey, and the reason He did so is there's a prophecy, Zechariah chapter 9 verse 9, that John quotes right here in verse 15. It says, "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt." In other words, in Zechariah's prophecy, what he's saying is that when the Messiah comes to Jerusalem in order to set up His kingdom, He's going to come on a donkey.

Jesus knows all of what's happening, and so He deliberately goes and He does this. He comes in, and now the fire is literally ignited to the place that the Pharisees, that are terrified that if the fire ignites too big, that the Romans are going to come, they're going to push them back down, and take away their temple, and take away their authority, and take away their freedom. And so they say, when they see what's happening, they say, "See, you're gaining nothing." And then notice what he says. He says, "Look, the whole world has gone after Him." The world.

That's a strange thing to say, isn't it? Right? Or was it? For who should show up next but some Greeks, Gentiles, people who were not among the people who would have Jesus as the King of Israel, and they too want to see Jesus. They go to Philip. They probably went to Philip, I'm not sure if they did ... I'm not sure why. Perhaps Philip just looked welcoming, I'm not sure. But Philip and Andrew were the only two of the Twelve who, although they were all Jewish, Philip and Andrew had Greek names, so maybe they said, "Well, maybe they'll sympathize with us." I'm not exactly sure, but they go to Philip, he goes to Andrew, they go to Jesus. We don't know if they even get an audience with Jesus at all. We're not told that, but it's interesting that at the birth of Jesus, we find Jews and Gentiles gathering, don't we? Shepherds and Wise Men.

Palm Sunday, when Jesus comes into Jerusalem, we see Jews and we see Gentiles gathered. And five days later, when He's hanging on a cross, Jews and Gentiles will look upon Him and say, "Surely this, this was the Son of God." And at the end of the book, when we get to His final throne, we see Jews and Gentiles, people from every tribe and tongue and nation all gathered around Jesus, and the reason is because He's not just the King of the Jews, He's the King of the world. He's the King of the whole world. And so, as we think about how do we apply this kingship over our life, let me encourage us as a church family, let's yield to Jesus as King of our lives.

One of the things that's true about sociology is it helps us understand not only things about ourself, but it also helps us to understand things that should be true about ourself. What's interesting is that when we sinned, what happened to our heart is it became so twisted, right, that the polarity of our heart got mixed up, and so we start loving the wrong things. You and I, we were created to love God, and we were created to be near and to worship Jesus Christ, and so, like a palm tree, we lean towards the sun, Jesus Christ.

But it's interesting that when we sinned, our heart twisted; we still loved, we just loved in the wrong directions.

And this is the reason we have such an affection and an infatuation with celebrity. I want you to know that our fascination with celebrity is really just a homing device in our hearts to lead us to Jesus. Every time you have such a fascination with an individual that's going to die and go to the grave just like you, they're in need of a Savior, they're not your savior. Jesus is your Savior. You were made to find your joy in Him, and so every time you have this special inclination in the heart to love someone because they're a celebrity, whether it's an athlete, whether it's an actor, whether it's a pastor, it doesn't matter what it is, what they do, there should be a homing device in your heart that says, "Well, that's really appealing, but what this is really doing is pointing me back to Jesus."

So when we think about how do we yield to this kind of King, I want to phrase it in three different areas, okay? First, I think what it means is to yield to the requirements of relating to this King, and the Bible calls that faith. You see, if Jesus really is a King, and if people really want to see Him, then there's some kind of protocol to see a King. You can't just go and just see Him. What it says in the Bible is that although our inclination in our heart is to try to earn acceptance, either by good works, or by sad looks, or by pity, or by whatever it is, the Bible says that we've been saved by grace through faith, and this not by ourselves, it's a gift of God, so that none of us can boast.

You see, the King has to be pleased to allow you into His presence, and the Bible says without faith, it's impossible to please Him. But with faith, it is possible, so when we trust Jesus, and His accomplishments on the cross, and when He rose from the dead, Jesus literally welcomes us into His family, and we have access into His presence forevermore. And so, we first must yield to His requirements for relating to Him.

I think the second thing, what it means is that we yield to the preferences of this King. We yield to the preferences of this King. Once we're in the family, we find out what this King loves, and just like any relationship that we're a part of, where we're showing preference to people that we care about, we look at Jesus and we go, "Oh, Jesus, that makes you happy when I live like that? It makes you happy when I love, or when I'm generous, or when I don't lie?" Well, then that doesn't add me to the family if I do those things; what it does is it shows that I really have an affection for the One whose family I'm in. And so we would want to show preference, and this is how we yield to Him, and what the Bible calls that is obedience, where God says, "This is how I want you to live."

But then there's a third aspect, I think, to yielding to Jesus, and it's this, it's to yield to Him, it's to yield to His commission of this King, and the Bible calls that a mission. He tells us, our King tells us, "Go and make disciples of all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them everything that I've commanded you, and I'm with you, I promise I'm with you." It's an amazing thing for us.

You see, while we love to commission people, while we pray for people, while we send people out, and while we're even going to have concerts in two weeks for Christmas, it's not just to stoke the wonder of His incarnation in our hearts, it also serves to give us an opportunity to invite people, maybe who don't know Christ, to come and hear. Maybe you can share the gospel with them beforehand, or maybe after. You can come, and you say, "So, what'd you think about that?" And you can start a dialogue with them. See, in all of these ways, what we're doing is we're yielding to this King, who's the King not only over the Jews, but the Gentiles and the whole world.

The second thing I want you to see is that Jesus came as the promised sacrifice for all people. You see, just as the fire is raging, it's interesting, Jesus chooses to add more fuel. Jesus, at this very moment, He says, "You know what? The hour has come for the Son to be glorified." On five different occasions through John, we've read John say, "His hour had not yet come," and now we read Him saying, "It's time." This is like when soldiers hear that the war's over because the war's been won, or when the bride hears it's now time to walk the aisle, or when we wake up our children on the morning of Christmas, and we say, "It's time." All the working and all the waiting are now over. Jesus is saying at this moment, "It's time. You don't have to wait any more."

And it's interesting that at that very moment, instead of adding more gasoline, now what Jesus does to the fire is He pours a bucket of water over it. He says something that's really intriguing. What He says is this: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Now, I don't know how many botanists there are in the room right now, but when you think about seeds, when we put them into the ground, there's a little picture here I want to show you. Right? The very first thing that takes place is it begins its dying process, and that dying process actually manifests something that's really amazing, is that in the process of a seed's death, it literally produces roots and then shoots, so that it bears much fruit.

And Jesus uses this as an illustration of His own life when some Greeks want to see Him. I think this is what Jesus is really saying. He's saying, "Oh, so there's some Greeks that want to see me. Well, they should want to see me, because in a week, I'm going to be the most glorious sight on the earth. But if I leave the road that I'm walking right now in order for people to be able to get a glimpse of a King, then I will remain like a seed in a bag instead of in the ground, and the fruit of redemption will never take place. But if, like a seed in the ground, I go and die, then I will bear much fruit. And so, for any who would want to see me, this is how I want them to see me. Let them see me dying, let them see me buried, and let them see me bearing fruit."

And, you see, this is no accident. Jesus' death was not a plan that went awry. Psalm 18, which is the one that they quoted, right, "Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," that's verse 25 and 26. But in Psalm 118 verse 27, I want to show you another verse, it says, "The Lord is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us. Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar." Now, what does that mean?

Well, Passover time, they took an unblemished lamb, and that lamb became a sacrifice that was brought to the horns of the altar, and it was sacrificed to God, but as you can imagine, most animals didn't want this, and so they had to be bound.

And what he's saying is this: The prophecy from Psalm 118 says that ... "Save us now, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," and what he's saying is that this blessed one who comes in the name of the Lord, not only is He the light that will shine upon us, but He will be the sacrifice that will need to be bound and placed upon the altar. He will be the one who must die. In order to establish a kingdom, in order to establish a people, in order to build His church, He had to die. This was no accident.

And so, for you and I as people who are living today in this world, I want to encourage you, let's look to the cross as a reminder of His undying love. You see, many people in this room today, just like myself, want to see Jesus in a particular way. You're wanting Him to show up right now, either to protect you, or to provide something for you, or to give you counsel or wisdom. I know I am. There's several things that I've been carrying for several weeks and even months now that I'm just saying, "God, I need Your intervention. I want Your understanding in this." And what I believe He wants us to know is this, is as we wait for His intervention, let the cross of Jesus Christ serve as the reminder of what Jesus wants us to see the most, for it is the greatest expression of love and devotion and courage that anyone has ever displayed for you and for me.

This is why Paul says in Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" So, have you trusted Him? And if you have, I would encourage you, even during this season, maybe you need God to show up in a special way in your life, I want to encourage you on a daily basis to consider, consider Jesus dying for you as the seed that was placed into the ground so that there could be fruitfulness. He wants you to see that about Him. Don't let that escape your mind.

The third and last thing I want you to see is that Jesus came as the promised example to the church. It's interesting that Jesus takes all of this a step further. So far, He's talked a lot about Himself, and what this is going to mean for Himself, and now what He does is He turns the mirror, and He says, "Now, this is what it's going to mean for people that are going to follow me." Jesus' humble self-sacrifice is His design for how we should live as His church so that other people can see Him today. See, the Pharisees looked at Him, and they said, "You see, you're gaining nothing." They look at Jesus, and they could see no gain whatsoever.

But it's interesting that Jesus says this. He says, "He who loves his life will lose it. He who hates his own life in this world shall keep it to eternal life. If anyone serves me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall my servant also be. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him." So the truth about Jesus, He redirects to ourselves, and He begins asking us questions.

“Will you see me as gain? Will you follow me? Will you emulate me? Will you live with such devotion that other people, perhaps in sheer confusion of how you’re living, they process your self-sacrifice, when you deny yourself for the sake of the gospel going forth, for the sake of love, or for the sake of purity, or for the sake of obedience, they look at the self-sacrifice that you make for those causes, and they can only understand it by saying, ‘You must hate yourself?’”

For you and for me, I want you to know that everything that we sacrifice, it will all be worth it. The very last verse says, “If anyone serve me, the Father will honor him.” One day, everything, it will all be worth it. It will be worth it, Providence. So, by way of application, let’s choose self-sacrifice in order to point people to Jesus. You see, we have been called to emulate a King so humble that He rode to town on a donkey. He could’ve written the prophecy different; it was His prophecy. He could’ve said, “I’m going to come in with a war horse,” but He didn’t.

We’ve been called to emulate that kind of King, and so when the crowds in America and the world, they cry, “Hosanna,” at Jesus, or Christianity, or maybe even your life, self-sacrifice will quietly take the low place and redirect all affection to Him. And when, just like Jesus, a few days pass and that same crowds, they yell, “Crucify Him,” to Jesus, or to Christianity, or to your life in example, then self-sacrifice will quietly persevere. Self-sacrifice will give and pray and go for the sake of the mission. Self-sacrifice will look a lot like connecting, growing, serving, and going, so that we can introduce all peoples to Jesus Christ and grow them up to love and worship Him.

And so, let me ask you what I’ve been asking myself this week, and that is, is there something God is calling you to die to, to sacrifice in your own life, so that you might see Christ more clearly and show Him to others more compellingly? See, for those of us who’ve trusted Jesus Christ, God has given us a really unique way to remember Jesus’ sacrifice and to profess our faith in Him. It’s called the Lord’s Supper. So, for those that’ll be serving us, I’m going to ask you to go ahead and stand and head to the back. As you get prepared to serve us, let me say just a few thoughts here.

The supper that we’re going to take, the Lord’s Supper, we call it, it consists of two elements, bread and a cup. The bread symbolizes the body of Jesus that was broken, and the cup symbolizes the blood of Jesus that was spilled on the cross for us. To take this is to affirm that you are believing in Jesus, and that you are following this King, that you’re yielding to this King. So if you have yet to trust Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, I would ask you, we as a church would ask you just to let these things pass. Perhaps after our service, we could talk to you about following Jesus, and then maybe next time that we do this, you can take of these things. But to take them is to treasure them.

And for those of us who have trusted Christ, you're all welcome, we're all welcome to the table. But the Bible says before we take of this, we should examine our heart, we should examine ourself, and see if there's any sin in us. And so, as these things are being passed, I would encourage you just to take these moments to ask God, "Is there any sin in my life that I've not confessed?" And to take that moment to confess it so that you can be forgiven, so that you can take these elements with a clear conscience. So, if you would, let's bow, let's pray together.

Father in heaven, we thank You for the gift of the Lord's Supper to remember the most amazing sacrifice that's ever been made on the earth. Jesus, we love You, we yield to You, we acknowledge You, and we worship You. We remember what You did, and we profess without words, but with actions, that we believe in Jesus alone for the forgiveness of our sins. So fill us with joy and thanksgiving as we take this supper. We love you, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.



© 2016 Providence Baptist Church (Raleigh, NC)
Sermon transcripts may be used for preaching and teaching purposes, but may not be published or sold. While generally accurate, parts of this transcript may contain errors.
Providence reserves the right to correct and/or remove a transcript at any time.