

“For this very reason I came to this hour.”

Palm Sunday 2021

John 12:12-33

Introduction: (Read John 12:12-33) The people that lined Jesus’ way into Jerusalem and announced His coming as Messiah King with palm branches and acclamations of “Hosanna!” “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the king of Israel!” didn’t really understand what was taking place (**cf. 12:16**). The Pharisees who saw the crowds shifting toward Jesus as a result of the raising of Lazarus (cf. John 11) and plotted to kill Him and Lazarus in order to stop His growing popularity – they did not understand who He was – they did not understand the significance of this moment (cf. 12:17-19). I would argue that, the majority of those who came that day because of the word of the miracle of Lazarus having been raised from the dead, did not truly know what Jesus had come to do and what this miracle really meant.

Jesus Declared the Cross to be the Center Point or the Defining Moment in all of History – cf. 12:20-24, 27 – **Note:** There is no doubt that, to the Jews who lined that road into Jerusalem this was a significant day. They were, in effect, welcoming Jesus as Messiah, the King of Israel. What a hope filled and emotional moment this must’ve been. Prophecy/promise was being fulfilled before their very eyes. As big as this was in their thinking – they literally had no idea the magnitude or implications of this moment.

When Jesus spoke of “the hour for the Son of Man to be glorified” He was making reference to His death on the Cross. The Cross was/is the center point and defining event in all of (human and creation/cosmic) history.

- 12:23, 27b - Everything in the Biblical record foreshadows and anticipates the person and work of Jesus.

1. This is so because Jesus’ coming and His work done on the cross was established in the council of God before creation so that even the work of creation itself anticipates the Cross. Look at a couple of Gospel passages which make this clear (cf. John 1:1-18; Ephesians 1:3-10 – esp. vs. 9-10; 2 Timothy 1:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-20).

2. The implication of many significant Gospel statements such as Romans 1:1-4; Hebrews 1:1-3 is that, from the record of creation in Genesis 1-2, to the fall of man in Genesis 3 (cf. 3:15 for the first promise of Jesus which is the promise of redemption and restoration) through the call of Abraham and the founding of a nation, and the call of Moses and the Exodus, on to the giving of the Law and the Tabernacle, the monarchy and the establishment of the line of David...ALL OF IT either foreshadows/points to or anticipates Jesus. ***Jesus is the gravitational center of all of existence and history. It all revolves around Him and He both holds it together and gives it definition or meaning.***

- 12:23, 28 - The defining center that Jesus is to history and the gravitational mass Jesus exerts within creation and history is found in the truth of the Incarnation – “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” and “Father, glorify your name.” This One who rode into Jerusalem on this day – whom they lauded as Messiah, the promised King of Israel – was not simply a unique man (or even a supernatural man). He was not an angelic being (cf. Hebrews 1). ***He was the Divine Son of God who had become fully human while remaining fully God.***

1. Luke in his genealogy of Jesus recorded in Luke 3:23-38 – right after His baptism and the Spirit descending on Him, in which the Father declares, “You are my Son...” – Luke makes clear that Jesus was the Divine Son of God who had become “a real flesh and blood human being from the fallen line of Adam.”¹

2. Incarnation was an absolute necessity for the full work of the Gospel – the salvation and restoration of fallen humanity. Irenaeus, a 2nd century church father, defended the truth of the Incarnation when he wrote of Jesus,

*“Therefore, as I already said, He caused man (human nature) to cleave to and become one with God. For unless **man** had overcome the enemy of man, the enemy would not have been legitimately vanquished. And again: unless it had been **God** who had freely given salvation, we could never have possessed it securely. And unless **man** had been joined to **God**, he (man)² could never have become a partaker of incorruptibility.”³*

The real miracle/paradox at the heart of what we believe as Christians is that the Son of God entered into our fallen existence in such a way as to cause the life of the Triune God – Father, Son and Spirit – to intersect with our fallen human existence. He did this in such a way as to “fundamentally reorder” our existence as sons of Adam/fallen humanity – to “restructure” the being and character of those of us who are brought to life in Him. ***Because of the truth of the Incarnation – He can make us fit for life in the life and love of God!***⁴

Transition: This is a violent process – a war – which encompasses all of the life of Jesus and culminates in the “hour” of His glory – the Cross – which is both the “hour” of His deepest agony and the place where He achieves that which is His greatest joy!! **Hence;**

Jesus Declared the Cross to be the Center Point and Defining Moment in His Life – cf. 12:23-24, 27-33 – Paul Gavrilyuk opens one of his chapters on Cyril theology of Divine Kenosis in countering Nestorius with a quote from the Lenten Triodion which puts together the Incarnation with the Crucifixion; *“Today He who hung the earth upon the waters is hung upon the Cross. He who is King of the angels is arrayed in a crown of thorns. He who wraps the heavens in clouds is*

¹ James Sawyer, “Resurrecting the Trinity,” page 127.

² My addition, in this parent, for clarification

³ Ibid. pages 127-128, quoting Irenaeus, “Against Heresies”

⁴ Ibid.

wrapped in the purple of mockery. He who in Jordan set Adam free receives blows upon His face. The bridegroom of the church is transfixed with nails."⁵

- 12:23-24, 27 - The Centrality of the Cross in the life and ministry of Jesus (in the mind of Jesus as He moved to the Cross) - Here in John 12, and throughout this Gospel, when Jesus speaks of "His hour" He makes explicit that this was the reason He came/was sent. ***The reason He became man was to go to the cross.***

The Gospels/the N.T. makes it clear that with every step of Jesus life – especially during His ministry – He was intentionally moving to this day, to this "hour," to the Cross (cf. Matthew **16:16-27; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; Luke 9:51-53**, 57-62; 13:22; 17:11, 12-19; 18:31-34; 19:28, 29-44 – cf. 19:41 and 13:34-35 – etc.).

- 12:23-24, 27-33 - The Cross as the defining moment/event of Jesus' life – The single greatest accomplishment – the pre-eminent goal of the Cross is that the glory of God be revealed there (the hour of the Son's glory and the hour of the Father's glory – 12:23, 28). This glory is accomplished in judgment – a 3 fold judgment - and in the rescue, reconciliation and restoration of fallen humanity – the New Humanity. Jesus – the Incarnate Son of God – came as a man to do war with sin, death and evil itself on the cross.

The judgment of 12:31-33 which takes place at the cross falls upon the world and our sinful flesh and the enemy – Satan or "the prince of this world." The outcome/purpose of this is that when Jesus is "lifted up" that He may then "draw all men" to Himself.

Note: The judgment and the salvation are brought together explicitly in Ephesians 2:1-6 (the death brought on by sin which holds sway by the world, in submission to the will of the enemy and the flesh).

Transition: We shouldn't romanticize this because this costs Him everything (cf. 12:23-25, 27). He was "***deeply troubled***" or "***My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death***" (Matthew 26:38). Why was Jesus so deeply troubled at this moment – and was it just as the "hour" approached and then arrived that He was so very troubled?

- 12:27; Hebrews 5:7-10; 12:1-3 – This means that every single day of His life was, ***unavoidably and consciously***, lived on "the way of the Cross" – This way was filled with the agony of Incarnation – life in subjection to a fallen world - and the profound and indomitable joy of the glory of the Father in the restoration of fallen humanity.

1. 12:27; Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-10 - I would like provide an extended quotation from Sawyer on the profound suffering of Jesus in the Incarnation – a suffering which culminates in the agony of Calvary;

⁵ Gavriilyuk, "The Suffering of the Impassible God," page 135

*“God, as Trinity, is humble, and loves his fallen creation – loves it enough to join in solidarity with us, the fallen crown of that creation. God, as man, lived life in the same circumstances and condition as the rest of us. He felt the fear, the angst, and the pain we all feel. He felt the rejection, the condemnation, the disgust, the hatred, and all the other negative emotions and temptations that we feel, and with at least the same intensity. His deity did not shield him from anything; if anything it intensified the experience. We misunderstand the point of the incarnation if we see Jesus merely as an instrument of God to pay for our sins. His entry into fallen Adamic existence is not just to be the perfect sacrifice; **it is to convert and redeem humanity by absorbing the full consequences of our sin in life and in death, all the while living and dying as the one faithful human being in our humanity**, and so bring healing to the fear and alienation. God as Father, Son and Spirit refused to let humanity continue in its helpless and hopeless condition. If he did not enter into the depth of our alienation and defy it by nevertheless continuing to love and obey God with his whole self, his blessings could not reach us.”⁶*

It is true that the moment of His death on the Cross was the moment of His triumph in the battle, as man, for the salvation of man. However, Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-10 tell us that the battle for our rescue was fought every day of His life here among us. It is true that the agony of the incarnation led up to and culminated in the agony of the Cross.

Read Matthew 27:45-54 in order to get a sense of how this battle raged, unseen, on a cosmic level (cf. 1 John 3:8; Hebrews 2:14-18).

2. 12:32; Hebrews 12:1-3- As with the agony so too the joy - The power and dread of the suffering was met and faced by the profound and unshakable joy achieved. It was a joy experienced every day of His life – revisited in those times of crying out to His Father with loud cries and tears – and a joy anticipated through the Cross. T.F. Torrance wrote;

“In the death of Jesus Christ the final judgement of the world precipitated itself into the present; the final, ultimate conflict between God and evil had taken place on the cross. That was the great decisive point in the ages, the turning point between the old age and the new age. With the resurrection of Jesus from the dead the apostles realized that not only had the decisive event taken place, but the new age had already dawned; the new creation was already revealed in its transcendent perfection and glory in the risen man, Jesus – the first-fruits of the resurrection, the new Adam, the earnest and pledge of our inheritance.”⁷

- John 12:25-26, 32; Hebrews 12:1-3; Matthew 16:21ff - The Cross is now our calling – We who believe in Him now are called to follow Him on the way of the cross – with every step we don’t simply strive to imitate Jesus but we recognize that we walk His path bearing His Cross as our Cross. We live with the same consciousness of struggle and joy – until our “hour.” Torrance continues;

⁶ Sawyer, page 128

⁷ Torrance, “Atonement,” page 428

“...the ends of the world had come upon mankind, and the final victory of God over the forces of evil lay behind...With Pentecost, the outpouring of in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the apostles realized that not only was Jesus Himself the beginning of the new creation, but by participating in the Holy Spirit the apostles themselves were already participating powers of the age to come and were already living in the new age...”