

JOHN 12:12-16

[INTRODUCTION]

- If you want to laugh—and cry—google babies wearing glasses for the first time.
 - These unbelievably cute kids—round faces, chubby wrists—put on glasses and you watch it happen: Confusion, then focus, then delight.
 - The kids start smiling, laughing, reaching—the parents start crying...
 - Because suddenly—these wee ones can finally see what’s been in front of them all along.
 - Can you imagine the joy of seeing for the first time?
- On Palm Sunday: Jesus enters Jerusalem—he’s on his way to the cross to save us.
 - And **everyone** sees him—the **crowd** sees him; the **disciples** see him.
 - And yet—**none of them** really see him.
 - They’re blind to what’s right in front of them—his purpose, his mission.
 - And it stops them from experiencing deep joy.

[Transition]: So let’s step into the scene—see if we can see him this morning, and maybe even experience the kind of joy that comes when, like those children, everything comes into focus—maybe even for the first time.

[STATE]

Let’s pick up our imaginations and elbow our way into the large crowd gathered in V12.

- **It’s an EXCITING TIME of the year:**
 - People from all over country descended on Jerusalem for Passover Feast.
 - Important time in their religious calendar—like Easter is in ours.
- **And INTRIGUE is in the air:**
 - Whisper has rustled through crowds that Jesus is on way to Jerusalem.
 - He is a well-known figure at this point:
 - Some heard him **teach** with authority.
 - Others amazed by miraculous **signs**.
 - Having just **raised Lazarus** from dead, gossip about him at all-time high.
 - And the rumor is that this Jesus will be Israel’s new king.
 - At this point in history, Israel was under Roman occupation.
 - The crowd thought Jesus had come to lead a revolution—bring political freedom and usher in new era for the people.

As they wait for him, someone has an idea in V13: *Let's roll out the red carpet—and give Jesus an entrance fit for king!*

- **[Actions]:**
 - So they make their way to the main road that enters Jerusalem.
 - They line the street—creating an aisle for Jesus to come through.
 - And they wave palm branches in the air.
 - In the ancient world, palms were symbols of victory and triumph.
 - They were what you waved when a conquering hero came home—what you held when your king had won.
 - This is a victory parade.
- **[Words]:**
 - Which is why they start to cry out: **Hosanna!** It's a shout of adoration and praise.
 - And then the chorus builds: **Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!**
 - They're not just welcoming him—they're worshipping him!
 - This isn't just a celebration—it's a coronation!
The crowd is ready to crown him as king!

All of which makes Jesus's response in V14... unusual, intriguing, surprising.

- He **DOESN'T** rebuke them for treating him like a king.
- But what he **DOES DO** is unexpected:
 - After sending his disciples to find a **donkey**—he hops on, and rides into Jerusalem.
 - This is not a very kingly entrance:
 - He's not in a carriage. Not carried by servants. Not on a war horse.
 - A donkey—the least impressive entrance in history of unimpressive entrances.
- Imagine the Super Bowl parade—crowds, confetti, all the glitz and celebration—and then the MVP shows up... on a donkey.

What's happening here? V15 explains.

- **Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!**
- That's a quote from **Zec 9:9**—Israel's king will come in humility—riding on a donkey.
- And now—500 years later—Jesus **FULFILLS** this prophecy.
 - **He's saying: *I am the king.*** Wave your palm branches—jubilation is appropriate!
 - ***But I'm not kind of king you expect.*** The donkey testifies to that.
 - *I've not come to be served by you—but to serve you.*
 - *I've not come to rule over you—but to lay down my life for you.*
 - *I've not come to take from you—but to give myself for you.*

This is what the CROWD didn't get...

- They waved palm branches to celebrate a *political* victory they hoped would soon be theirs.
- But they didn't realize:
 - He had come to give them something so much better than that.
 - Forgiveness, hope, new purpose, joy, and after all that—eternal life.
- They saw him—but they didn't SEE him.

And we don't want to be too hard on them because V16 tells us that Jesus's own DISCIPLES didn't get it either!

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.

- Only later—after Jesus had died, risen, and ascended—did they connect dots.
- Imagine the moment it clicked:
 - A quiet morning... one of the disciples—let's say Bartholomew, because he never gets any airtime—is doing his devotional, working through Zechariah.
 - He gets to **chp 9: Your king is coming... humble and mounted on a donkey...**
 - And suddenly the light bulb goes on—he leaps up, spills his coffee, and rushes to tell the other disciples:
 - *Remember when we came into Jerusalem—the crowd, the palm branches, all the shouting?*
 - *Remember how we had to go find donkey?*
 - *Check it out—Zechariah 9—God told us that was going to happen!*

I can't believe we didn't see it!

[Transition]: But here's the thing...

- If you can see him—but not really see him...
 - If the **CROWD** did that...
 - If the **DISCIPLES** did that at first...
- It's worth asking: Do we really see him **OURSELVES?**

[ILLUSTRATE]: It makes me think about a documentary I heard on a podcast...

- Sarita and Simon met in college—they connected, developed a friendship, and then started to date.
- During that time Sarita discovered Simon has a condition called Prosopagnosia—or face blindness.
 - A developmental problem in the brain makes you unable to recognize or remember faces.
 - Simon describes it like walking through a park and studying the bark on a thousand trees:
 - Each one looks different—shape, color, texture—but you’d never be able to remember which one was which.
 - In same way, faces don’t fix in his mind.
- You can imagine their relationship had its quirks:
 - When they meet, Sarita has to wave or wear something distinctive so he’ll recognize her.
 - From time-to-time Simon would get himself in awkward situations—smiling or waving at the wrong curly haired girl.
- But Sarita was fine with all of this—because she’d fallen in love.
 - They graduated.
 - Moved in together.
 - And began to build a life.
- Until—about 18 months later—Simon ended it suddenly.
 - No major crisis. No clear reason.
 - Sarita was left confused and heartbroken.
- Some time passed.
 - They’d see each other occasionally at social events.
 - But then there was a gap—the clean break that’s needed after an intense relationship.
- And then, one day—Sarita walked past the restaurant where Simon was working.
 - He was outside, serving drinks.
 - She saw him—and caught his eye, with that mix of warmth and sadness you feel when you see someone you’re trying to get over.
- He looked straight at her—smiled politely... and moved on.
 - He no longer recognized her.
 - Her face had disappeared among the trees.
- Simon didn’t know this had happened until he was interviewed for the documentary. When he heard it, he said, *“I didn’t know that. It’s hard somehow; that I wouldn’t see her. It’s like she faded back into the crowd. Quickly. It’s actually haunting to me to hear that.”*

Love can look you in the eyes—and you don’t even see it.

[APPLY]

[Unbeliever]: I wonder how many of us suffer from spiritual prosopagnosia?

- The King is here—but we don't really see him.
- We hear gospel: That you are loved, valuable to God, precious in God's sight—so much so he that he sent his son to save you...
- But it doesn't have much impact:
 - The face of Jesus is seen for a moment...
 - But soon disappears among the trees.
- Palm Sunday says: The King is here.
 - To save you and to serve you.
 - To give you grace and set you free.
 - Love now stares you in eye—do you see him?

Don't let the one who went to the cross for you disappear among the trees.

[Believer]: And if you do see him—if he's come into focus for you...

- Palm Sunday invites us to see him yet more...
 - Toward end of his life, John—who wrote this passage—met Jesus, who pulled back the curtain of heaven and showed him what eternity looks like—what our future looks like.
 - **Rev 7:9-10:**
 - **After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number.** A crowd far bigger than that first Palm Sunday.
 - **from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages.** From Cuba, Kenya, Cambodia, Russia, Iran.
 - **standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes.** Spotless before Jesus because we've been washed in his blood.
 - **with palm branches in their hands.** Celebrating because the King has won.
 - **and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'** We have our own Hosannas to sing!
- Do you see what's happening here?
 - Palm Sunday is merely foretaste of a greater Sunday.
 - The eternal Sunday of heaven.
 - Where every tear will be wiped—from real eyes that have known real grief.
 - And every wrong made right—every injustice, every wound, every loss.

And as surely as Zechariah's prophecy came to pass, this one will too—bc Jesus wins.

- What would it look like to see **today** in light of what we will see **then**?
 - The pressures that feel overwhelming.
 - The conflicts that feel unresolved.
 - The routine, repetitive parts of life.
 - Or even the services we're going to walk through together this week.
- When you can see where he's taking us, it changes how you see everything—filling you with perspective, patience, perseverance, and peace.

[Transition]: And you know what? It's this same perspective that compels us—this Easter week—to invite our friends.

[THE CLOSE]

- It's our desire for people to join us **there** that leads us to invite them **here**.
- Will you invite someone to join us next Sunday?
 - Not just so they might join us in church.
 - But so they might join us in heaven.
- Who comes to your mind and heart?
 - A friend, a relative, a neighbor?
 - Don't let their face disappear among the trees.
 - Send that text, make that call, look them in the eye and invite them to come.
 - They might say no—and that's okay.
 - Or they might say yes:
 - They might come...
 - And they might finally see him—now and forevermore.

[CONCLUSION]

- Sometimes we see things—but don't really SEE them.
- This morning:
 - Let's not miss Jesus.
 - And let's invite our loved ones to see him too.

**Don't let the one who went to the cross for you disappear among the trees.
See him—with great joy.**