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JOHN 12:12-26

John Series: Get a Life in Jesus

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we as a fellowship of believers, brothers and sisters, come before you. Help us, Lord, in these next few minutes to set aside challenges temporarily just so we can focus in on you and then integrate your presence into the challenges of our lives. We want to take you home this week. So we're asking, Lord, to teach us and speak to us in ways that would drive us to a practical understanding of who you are. We're amazed as we open your word and see the truth that exists there. The fulfillment of prophecy in particular is just an amazing thing as we look at all the prophecies in your word about Jesus' first coming and then His second coming. It just speaks to your great plan, that you are the great I Am. We just acknowledge that and worship you. Lord, don't just teach our minds now. We ask that you'd teach our hearts. In Jesus' name, amen.

Today we're going to learn from a mistake, a mistake in thinking that the crowd had. When we get all done today, we're going to see that if we learn from that mistake and we have this one idea, it's going to help us settle our own hearts. It will help us center our hearts in the right way in the course of our everyday life. So I trust that as we go through this passage in John 12 today that God will use it to help you come to a place where you are saying yes, I have what I need this week in order to settle my heart when I find myself getting upset.

You see, here's the story. Let me give you a little preview of the story today. In John 12 we come to the triumphal entry. That's the week before Easter. I know we're not there in our calendar, but that's where we are in John 12. Because we're going verse by verse, this is where we are. That doesn't mean that next week we'll be at Easter. We've got a long week to go as we teach through the various verses until we get there. But this week's the triumphal entry.

If you remember, what you know about the triumphal entry, they come in, everybody is just happy and rejoicing, and Jesus is coming in. They're yelling and there's a great procession because they're happy and joyful. Five days later the crowd is angry and judgmental. They go from happy and rejoicing to angry and judgmental in that five day period of time. Why? Because they've got some thinking going wrong. They misunderstood what was happening in the coming in of the king. They didn't understand what was going on, He didn't meet their expectations, and so they're upset. That's what we're going to look at. Because I believe that sometimes we can look real good on Sunday, we can feel great, we can worship, but then it's not too many days go by before we're upset, judgmental, angry. I want to show you today what God would have for us so that we can keep ourselves centered on Him. So that's where we're headed.

Let's look at the passage in God's word. Why don't you stand with me as I read the first verses in our passage, chapter 12 of John. If you're looking in your own Bible, which I encourage you to do, look in your own Bible and we'll go from verse 12-19.

The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!"

Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: "Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt."

At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.

Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"

You may be seated.

We're in Passover week. Now this is the festival that's being referred to in the passage here. Passover week is this period of time when the population of Jerusalem would grow quite a bit. The reason is because they're celebrating. This big celebration of Passover. The first Passover took place way back in Egypt when God rescued the Israelites out of Egyptian custody. He took them out of there. But they had a problem and the problem was Pharaoh and his hard heart. Maybe you know somebody with a hard heart like Pharaoh. In Pharaoh's case it took ten bad things (ten of them) to happen before he was willing to let the people go. The last one, of course, being the death of the firstborn. What a painful, painful thing it must have been. But there was no death of the firstborn among the Israelites because they were given instructions in advance to take blood from the lamb's sacrifice and put it on the doorpost and the lentils on the doorway. And when they did, the death angel passed over them. That's how Passover becomes the name of this special festival that's being referred to here. Every year then after that the Passover would be celebrated. People would start coming into Jerusalem now. The whole population is swelling quite a bit. So there's a lot of people in Jerusalem.

But this is a different Passover than the other ones that we've seen so far. Why? Because the people have heard about Jesus. The word's gone out, CNN or otherwise. I'm not sure how everybody got the word, but the word has been passed now to everyone that there's a man who fed a whole crowd, thousands of people, with a little lunch. Could it be that this man really did cause a blind man from birth to see again? Could it be that deaf people are hearing, that the sick are being raised and healed? Could it be that Lazarus actually was raised from the dead? And if this is the case, if this is really true, this must be the Messiah that was prophesied about. We want to see Him. So there's this marvel and this news that's going around. People want to see Jesus.

Now Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem, so notice what people did. *They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!"* which means "save us." *"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!"*

This incident that took place on this one Sunday long ago was prophesied in the Old Testament. There are a number of prophecies that point to the various aspects of Jesus' life. This is one that's connected. So bear with me as I take you on a tangent for a moment. I want to show you in the Old Testament where this story is predicted. You see, there are some psalms in the Old Testament that we call Messianic Psalms. We call them Messianic Psalms because when the person was writing them, David or otherwise, was creating the psalm, he didn't know it had prophetic meaning. He was writing about his own experience, but then things happened that demonstrate that this is really a prophecy about Jesus Christ Himself.

I'm going to take you to Psalm 118. The whole psalm is a great psalm to read, but I just want to read the first seven verses and then pick it up in verse 21. This is a psalm we suspect is written by David during the time when he finally got into the kingdom. You know it took a long time for him to get where he needed to be. It was a hard road for him to get to become the king, painful for him. A lot of bad things happened for him and that's why he wrote a lot of psalms. You can see some of his pains and difficulty he experienced. But now he's in. He's in place and he's giving thanks to the Lord. So this is a thanksgiving psalm.

In verse 1 it says – *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let Israel say: "His love endures forever." Let the house of Aaron (those are the priests) say: "His love endures forever." Let those who fear the Lord say: "His love endures forever."*

I like this next verse. *When hard pressed, I cried to the Lord; he brought me into a spacious place.* I can feel the stress reduction in that passage. David says when I'm hard pressed, when I have stress all around me, God brought me into the park, into the country where I just felt that sense of relief. It was something God did inside of him and he's really grateful.

Notice he continues by saying – *The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? The Lord is with me; he is my helper. I look in triumph on my enemies.*

So that's how the whole psalm starts. I just want to give you the flavor of the psalm before we get to the Messianic part down here in verse 21. *I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.*

Verse 22 – *The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.* Now that's used by Peter to refer to Christ who was rejected by the leaders, but then became the cornerstone of the whole church and what God was going to do with all of that. So that's a reference that we're not looking at today, but it's part of the psalm. *The Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad.*

Next verse. *Lord, save us!* That's the word Hosanna. Save us, Lord. *Lord, grant us success!* Then look at these exact words. *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.* I'm going to take you back in the passage in a moment. You're going to remember that line. *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless you. The Lord is God, and he has made his light shine on us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.* Wow. A picture of what we're looking at in our passage today where he says – *"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!"*

Well the passage continues with more prophetic fulfillment. It says – *Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: “Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.”*

As it is written tells us that it’s written somewhere in the Bible. If we go and do the research, we’ll see that it’s located in Zachariah 9:9 and those words are part of the text in the Old Testament prophesying that the Messiah is going to come, not on a stallion, not on a white horse; He’s going to come in on a donkey in a humble way. It’s part of Jesus’ whole message – His humility and what we need in our own lives, His humility that He’s going to share with us. So that’s all happening there.

But the disciples and all the people, they didn’t understand this at the time. That’s why we have the next verse here. The next verse says – *At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.* So all of this prophetic kind of thing, they didn’t really understand until after the fact. Then they got it and they could understand and it made it a lot more sense to them. And of course as it does to us, we see the prophetic being worked out in the stories of Jesus.

Well I want to zero in now in the story into this one word that is used. The word *king*. It’s used twice in the passage – *Blessed is the king of Israel*. I want to zero in on the mistake that the crowd made. Because the crowds were thinking about a physical kingdom, a kingdom that had to do with political leaders and those political leaders would bring peace, resolved problems.

So they looked to Jesus to be this political leader. They imagined He was going to come now into Jerusalem as the Messiah, take over the government, and He would be such a great leader. I mean anybody who could turn a lunch into a meal for 5,000 people would be great because we wouldn’t need a welfare system now because now we’ve got Jesus. Anybody who could heal people, this is the best healthcare reform, plan that we could have. The healing of Jesus in people’s lives. So they’re excited. They want to see the Messiah come and they are positioning themselves along their road so they can tell their children and their grandchildren that they saw the Messiah as He was coming into the Jerusalem to be the king.

Unfortunately they misunderstood the whole idea here. Jesus is a king, but He’s not the same kind of king that they think He’s going to be. This isn’t going to be a political leadership, a political king. This is going to be someone who has a different reign, a different kingdom.

In fact did you know that Jesus, when He came to earth, had one sermon that He preached. But He preached it lots of different times. In fact here’s what He said about Himself. He says – *I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God*. So this *kingdom of God* is the phrase He uses over and over and over again. Preaches a same sermon, different illustrations.

The illustrations were often parables. The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. The kingdom of God is like a net thrown down into the water to draw up many fish. The kingdom of God is like a seed scattered on the ground, four different kinds of soil. So He’s continually saying *the kingdom of God*. He uses different illustration to help us get the idea. But continually He’s talking to different people about the kingdom of God. Remember that He says to Nicodemus in

John 3 anyone who's going to see the kingdom of God must be born again. It's the kingdom of God over and over again as He's sharing that.

But it's not a kingdom that we normally think of as a physical kingdom. It's different than that. It's a spiritual kingdom. And this is what the people didn't understand. In fact when Jesus was before one of the political leaders, Pilate, who questioned Him and said, "*Are you the King of the Jews?*" Jesus responded by saying this: "*My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.*"

Thus we have the mistake of the crowds that believed that it was a physical kingdom. Really it was a spiritual kingdom. If we understand the depth of the spiritual kingdom that God has set up, then we can tap into it because, as Jesus says at one point, the kingdom of God is within you.

This kingdom of God is this recognition that Jesus Christ came to die and to set up this spiritual bank of resources for us. That He comes to live inside of us and the Holy Spirit empowers us. And that is the kingdom. This place where Jesus Christ rules in our hearts. He wants to rule and reign in our hearts. And when He does, then we experience peace in a different dimension. I don't want the peace the world has to offer. I want the peace that Jesus has to offer because it's moving us into this spacious place inside of our lives that He offers us. It's just a beautiful thing. It's a kingdom of God.

The word *kingdom of God* is used about 130 times in the New Testament, primarily in the gospels. Fifty-five times in the book of Matthew alone. Jesus was proclaiming the kingdom of God. It is a secret. Notice this verse. Jesus says to them – *The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you.* It's a secret. It's something special. You have this accessible to you. You keep this in mind. This is for you. Other people won't realize this. You'll be around, other people will be living life, and they're living in the physical presence. They're looking at the things they're eating and drinking and wearing. They're looking at all those things in their life and as they do, they're focusing on the physical. Jesus is saying there's something bigger. Jesus' whole mission was to come and teach us that there is a kingdom of God that we can be a part of. When we're born again, we enter the kingdom of God and then we're part of that. We have different citizenship and we're serving our Lord Jesus Christ. *This secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you.*

Now Paul, as he's referring back to the kingdom of God and thinking about it later after Jesus Christ's death, writes these words about the kingdom of God. He says – *It's not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.* See, it's a different kind of kingdom.

This is really important, I think, for us because, well, the crowds...do you remember at the time when Jesus fed the 5,000 people at the end of the story it says the crowds decided they would take Jesus by force to make Him king. Remember that passage? They were going to make Him king by force. But that's not Jesus' plan. Jesus slipped out of the crowds there. He was gone. Because Jesus doesn't work in coercion. That's not His way that He is influencing the world.

I need that message. Sometimes when I feel like force would be a good idea when someone is doing the wrong thing. I don't know about you, but do you ever drive along and you see

someone with a bumper sticker on that's anti-Christian. Obviously they're making a sarcastic remark about... I feel like taking some black spray paint out and spraying over it and getting that message off the road. My wife would say, "That's not a good idea, Scott." Because that's not God's way of changing the world.

I think early on Christianity made some significant mistakes with soldiers. You can convert or you die kind of approach to Christianity. It's a mistake. That's not how God is changing the world. He has these different guidelines when it comes to bringing righteousness in, to being a light on the hill so that people are attracted (not coerced) to something that they need in their lives because of the message that's out there for others. That's how the kingdom of God is different. And when we understand the kingdom of God, it helps us deal with our own emotions. I'm not just talking about the people who were upset and wanting to crucify Jesus five days later. But the kingdom of God is the solution for dealing with our own anxiety challenges that we experience. I'll show you the passage.

Watch this. The kingdom of God is a solution. *"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Faith is going to be our ticket into this kingdom. So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But (what does it say?) seek first the kingdom of God. Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*

The satisfaction that we need, the fulfillment we need, the peace as mentioned in Romans 14 come from the kingdom of God that is within us when we've trusted Christ as our Lord and Savior. It's just a remarkable understanding as we continually go through and see the kingdom of God mentioned in the Bible. It's an idea that these people and those moments at the triumphal entry did not understand. Because they didn't understand it, they were easily moved to something else. Persuaded to be angry and be upset. We need the kingdom of God in our hearts to get through this week. If we can get through five days without getting upset, it's because of the kingdom of God in our hearts. God wants to do some powerful things in our lives. And the kingdom of God is the solution.

I want to take you back now to John 12, which is our passage for today. I want to take you a little further in the passage because Jesus now gives us an understanding of how this all works, what we are to do in order to embrace the kingdom. What do I need to do? is your question. Right? Here's what the kingdom of God means.

So we're back in John 12. It says – *Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival.* Now you've got to remember, if you know your geography, Greece is a long way. I mean that Mediterranean Sea is huge. Okay? They are a long way to get to Jerusalem. It was taking at least weeks to get from where they are to come to the Passover meal or a Passover celebration. And these Greeks *came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus."* And that's what happens when we see and hear what God is doing in other people's lives. There's something in us that says, "I've

got to check this out. I've got a hole in my heart. Could Jesus really fill that?" *We would like to see Jesus.*

Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." So He's going to die, and as a result of His death it's going to have a tremendous fruit is the idea. Then He says this: "Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life." And verse 26 – "Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me."

You see in a kingdom there is a king and there are servants. The challenge in our lives is that we try to build our own little kingdom, right? We try to deal with the physical things around us to build the walls and to establish the things that provide security for us. We try to establish control in our lives by building an earthly kingdom in sometimes physical things, but sometimes the way we treat people, just the way we interact with other people. We build this kingdom. The challenge is continually for us to move from our kingdom to God's kingdom. And when we move to God's kingdom then something happens because we're no longer the lord, we're no longer the boss. We're the servants in the kingdom. So the ticket to being able to center ourselves in our own emotions and our own lives is to acknowledge the kingdom of God, to embrace the kingdom of God, and to become servants of the ruler of the kingdom of God inside of our lives, inside of our hearts. That's going to be the solution.

So as you leave today, I hope you're going to take this idea about Jesus and His reign, Jesus and the kingdom of God, and take Jesus home with you. Take it into your own life. Take it to a place where you can use this. When you're starting to be upset, when you're starting to lose it, when you're starting to do something wrong, that you're saying, "Wow, I need to be a servant of Jesus. That is the most important thing in my life."

When Jesus was on earth, He was asked a question. "*Lord, teach us to pray.*" And Jesus, I can imagine, said, "Okay, everybody bow their heads and close their eyes and I'm going to show you how to pray. I'm going to teach my kids how to pray (or whatever). I'm going to show you what that looks like." And in the next few verses we have the Our Father prayer, or the Lord's Prayer that many of us memorized as children. How many of you memorized the Lord's Prayer as a result of your heritage in one way or another? Okay. So we kind of got it.

We're going to recite it together, the Lord's Prayer, because I want you to see the word *kingdom* is in there twice. Because Jesus is on a mission. He's teaching them about the mission and He's saying when you pray, acknowledge the kingdom. Also you want to be careful about evil, He's saying in the prayer, because that evil can get you into trouble. It's the kingdom that's so important and that kingdom is in our hearts. That's what we're praying for when we pray this prayer together, the Our Father prayer. It's a prayer that helps remind us, as an example prayer (that's what it is, an example kind of prayer), that God is in charge. And every day when I pray, whether you pray the Our Father prayer or you pray another prayer like it, you're praying, "God, I want you to control my life. I want to serve you. It is your kingdom that I'm involved in and I want to be a part of it."

Now there are a lot of you who didn't raise your hands, so I'm going to put the prayer up here. So you're welcome to keep your eyes open while we pray and you'll know what words we're going to say as we do pray. Would you stand with me?

[PRAYER] Lord, I thank you that you have given us your word and that you've given us your example. I appreciate your sermon that you shared with so many people while here on earth about the kingdom. We need that and we need to embrace that in our own hearts. So we're just asking, Lord, to soften us in areas where our heart has grown hard, that you would strengthen us in areas where we're weak. Teach us what it means to live in your kingdom and to serve you with all our heart. Lord, we're grateful for Jesus' words when He taught us how to pray. So as we say those together, Lord, we're coming to you, but we also are saying them for ourselves to remind us of what's important.

Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.