

Fresh Eyes

- There is a story about a pastor filling in at a church one Sunday. He tapped the microphone to make sure it was on. He heard nothing even though it was working fine. He leaned closer to the mic and said there's something wrong with this thing. The congregation not really paying attention immediately responded, "and also with you!"

I can't speak for you, but I know when things get a little too familiar, I find myself just going through the motions like that congregation and also with you. We get so steeped in routine that we stop paying attention to what we are doing. Why do you think that many car accidents occur just minutes from people's homes? It's familiar and people get comfortable and go through the motions.

This can also be the danger on this Palm Sunday. **Hold up a Palm Branch.** You are used to these palm branches. Most of you realize that Easter is next Sunday and you have heard most all of this before because this is your 10th, 40th, 50th, or 60th time hearing about Jesus parading into Jerusalem on a donkey. As a result it's easy to hear about the triumphal entry, death, and resurrection of Jesus without ever really grasping what is happening here.

Join me as we look at this text as if we are looking at it for the very first time. If nothing else, even as we look at this text for maybe not the first time, we do have to look at it differently, because as far as I know none of us have been in this time before when we could not gather together in a physical way for any Holy Week services.

I want to begin a little earlier to set the stage. Lazarus in chapter 11 has been raised from the dead by Jesus after he has been dead for four days. Jesus simply spoke by saying Lazarus come out and he did.

This freaked the Jews out a little bit as it would have me and you and so some of them tattled on Jesus by going to the Pharisees. All of the big wig religious leaders huddled and basically said, if this guy continues to do all of these miracles we are finished. The Romans will come and take our power. We like our station in life and we don't want that to happen.

Then this chief priest Caiaphas said something that was ironic in verse 50. He says it is better for you that one man should die for the people not that the whole nation should perish. Later it states that as high priest he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation. Have you ever noticed this before? Do you see how ironic this statement is? Explain why the religious leaders want him to die.

There is so much truth in this right? Jesus is going to deliver not a nation but the nations from their sin and Jesus would draw all people to Himself and everyone would have freedom from sin, freedom to live the life Jesus has given and follow Him as Lord, Savior, and Messiah.

Big Crowd in 12:12 and they are there to see Jesus. Palm trees yelling Hosanna, Save I pray or Give salvation now! Not only are the religious leaders confused about the type leader Jesus was. The crowd started calling him the king of Israel. In this governmental set up this would not be good because no king was needed in this government. But how they were greeting Jesus was what would happen to dignities like governors, generals, war heroes. In the Jewish tradition the waving of palm branches signified there was a national victory.

Are they right that Jesus is the Messiah? Yes. The Jews knew Zechariah 9:9 and here is Jesus fulfilling that promise. The one who raised Lazarus is the promised king and Messiah. Yet they think it is from a National political perspective, not a Messiah one who has come to save us from our sin's perspective.

Here Jesus is redefining what it means to be a king. He does not just reign nationally for a select group of people, but Jesus is there to declare that He has come for everyone. In an ironic way the Pharisees see this.

They say in verse 19, *"Look even the world has gone after him."*

The Pharisees mentioned you can't stop Jesus you can only hope to contain him. Everyone in the world is following Him.

Jesus didn't need social media to go viral, but he was the first to go viral. You can find any vaccine to inoculate the virus that is Jesus and His love. When the world and the Greeks are going after him what John is saying is that these are people of non- Jewish background that Jesus is the king who fulfills the promises made to Israel who reigns as the king of all people.

Jesus also shows everyone that He will be glorified as king not with their praises but instead by giving up His life.

24 *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.*

But Jesus death there is life. The old seed dies and is fertilizer which promotes life. Look at fire in a forest. Fire forges and creates life.

This is incomprehensible for the Jews of the day and for the culture in general. Jesus death will show His love for the world. One man has to die so the world is saved. Caiaphas was onto something earlier.

John 12:31-32 *Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."*

Jesus will cast out the devil and Jesus will be lifted up not by praises but on the cross for you and for me, for all of the people there in that scene. The awesome news for you

and me is that Jesus didn't avoid death, He overcame it and as a result He remains forever.

Yet, all of this is understandably incomprehensible for the crowd. Jesus calls all of the people present to believe in the light while it is still with them. Isn't it interesting that the coming of Jesus blinded the eyes of the people. Because of sin because of hardness of heart, because the people were looking for Jesus to be some other kind of Savior, they are in fact blind to King Jesus that is right in front of them. It brings us back to the words *John said in chapter 1*

¹¹ *He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.* ¹² *But to all who did receive him, who*
believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ *who were born, not of blood nor of*
the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,*
and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full
of grace and truth.

You know you and I are no different that these crowds. We try to make Jesus into our guru, Genie, our political savior. We try to make things that Jesus has created like money, family, friends, people, our jobs, where we live, our Savior and king. And as

a result we miss the light of Jesus the king and your messiah who stands right in front of you. This Holy week, know that Jesus forgives you and is your Savior and Lord who loves you, who forgives you, who you can rest in, and you can put your hope and trust in. Amen