

Sermon: Life Arrives!

Text: John 12:1-19

Discussion Questions:

In John 12, we find Jesus attending a party—a banquet. Back in John 2, when Jesus turned the water into wine, He was a guest at someone else's party (the unnamed bride and groom). And now (John 12:1-11), the party is FOR JESUS! And for good reason. More than transforming water into wine—Jesus has transformed a very dead man (four days in the tomb!) into a very living man. In fact, this dead-now-alive man is right there next to Jesus. Look at him! There he sits! How in the world can you argue with that?!

Which begs some very interesting questions...

- If you were a guest at that banquet, what is the first question you would ask Lazarus?
- Imagine that you, yourself, are Lazarus. You were dead for four days—and now you're alive and eating a meal with Jesus. Is there ANYTHING that you would now be afraid of? Would you be afraid of dying again? Would you be afraid of people threatening you—or ridiculing you for your association with Jesus? Seriously—is there anything that you would fear?
- We know that there were some at that banquet who STILL DIDN'T believe that Jesus was the Messiah—the Son of God. Try to put yourself in their shoes. Why do you think they persisted in their refusal to believe in Jesus? What would the “cost” have been to put their faith in Jesus? You're sitting there looking at Lazarus. What's going through your mind? Are you concocting some version of the miracle that somehow explains what happened in human terms? Maybe, even after four days, Lazarus had been buried alive? How can you possibly be a witness to the miracle—and the living, breathing, presence of Lazarus sitting right there—and still refuse to believe that Jesus is the Son of God?
- OK—now imagine that you are Mary or Martha. What gift could you possibly give to Jesus that could even begin to express your gratitude for what Jesus has done? Would cost be a factor in the gift you would give?

Examination:

- Read **John 11:45-57**
 - Up to this point in the Gospel of John, there has been a tremendous amount of conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees. They've been trying to seize Him, and confront Jesus at every turn. Do verses 45-53 seem different...progressing to an even more intentional and intense level?
 - What is the core motivation for the Pharisees wanting to kill Jesus (v. 48)?
 - In raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus has just displayed unimaginable power over death. He did what no other human could even think about doing. And here the religious leaders are—plotting to take His life. Do you think it even crossed their minds that Jesus would have the power to raise Himself?
- Read **John 12:1-11**
 - This party to honor Jesus, apparently being thrown by Martha, Mary and Lazarus (although possibly at another person's home in Bethany), takes place on the

Saturday just prior to Palm Sunday—and likely just weeks after Lazarus had been raised. Talk about what you think the mood would have been at this party.

- How do verses 2 and 3 seem to reflect and reinforce what we already know about the personalities of these three siblings (see Luke 10:38-42)?
 - We learn from verse 5 that the pure nard that Mary poured out on Jesus' feet was worth an entire year's wages. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median wage for workers in the United States in the fourth quarter of 2017 was \$857 per week or \$44,564 per year. Let that sink in. Mary poured upwards of \$50k onto Jesus FEET and into the dust. What motivated this kind of extravagant sacrifice?
 - How does Judas "show his cards" in this story?
 - What do you think it means when Jesus said that "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial." (v. 7)?
 - Discuss the irony of verse 10.
- Read **John 12:12-19**.
 - It really helps to think about the logistics surrounding Palm Sunday. The village of Bethany is just over a mile from the crest of the Mount of Olives—on the same "Palm Sunday Road" that Jesus traveled down and into Jerusalem. We learn from verse 9 that large crowds of people came out to Bethany to see both Jesus and Lazarus on Saturday—the day before Palm Sunday. The streets of Jerusalem were jam-packed due to it being the national holiday of Passover & the Feast of Unleavened Bread (12:1). The crowds were at a near fever-pitch with expectation, wondering if Jesus would make an appearance at Passover (11:55-56). Raising Lazarus from the dead poured "jet fuel" on the entire situation (12:17-18). How does putting these pieces together help bring a deeper level of understanding to the events surround Palm Sunday?
 - What are the implications of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey (v. 14)?
 - What were the expectations of the crowds in shouting "Hosanna!" (v. 13)?
 - Talk about the word "king." Zechariah 9:9 describes the fact that Israel's "king" is riding on a donkey, righteous and victorious. Later that week, the sign that is hung over Jesus' head while on the cross read: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews". Lost in the shuffle of all of this is the fact that—on Palm Sunday—Jesus is being inaugurated as a king. What's your thought on this?
 - Is it any surprise that the disciples didn't understand any of this until later, following the resurrection and ascension (v. 16)? Why do you think John thought to include this detail—especially since it doesn't put John and the other disciples in the best of light?
 - What do you think the Pharisees meant by saying, "This is getting us nowhere." (v. 19)? WHAT was getting them nowhere?
 - Was it true that the "whole world" had "gone after Him"—or was this just hyperbole?

Application:

Give some thought to what Mary did—pouring a \$44,000 vile of perfume on the feet of Jesus, and then wiping his feet with her hair. Why would she do this? Was it a waste? Does this cause you to think about your own life—and your own sacrificial giving? What are you willing to "pour out on Jesus feet"? Would you consider it to be a waste?