

Man on a Mission

John 12:12-16

People that set out to accomplish a task have to make hard decisions along the way. It takes focus, dedication, discipline to accomplish great things. Paul often used runners as an example in scripture of running the race of life with focus. Marathon runners have to commit to dieting, routines, healthy habits to train their bodies to accomplish a task. As we look at Jesus on Palm Sunday, I want us to see his focus on his main and the task at hand. There is a lot for us to learn about how he stayed on mission. We are called to live like Christ and there are so many applications of that calling, but the one I want to address today is his focus and think through what our main mission is as believers.

Please open your bibles to the book of John and we will be in chapter 12, starting in verse 12.

1. An Effective Witness

Read 12:12-13

The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: “Hosanna! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ The King of Israel!”

The day prior Jesus had this experience with the disciples where Mary anointed Jesus feet with expensive oil and wiped his feet with her hair. Among them was Lazarus.

Remember Lazarus had been raised from the dead. This presented a problem for the chief priests. Look at verses 9-11 with me.

9 Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. 10 But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, 11 because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.

This miracle that Jesus had performed was known and because of the testimony people were coming to faith in Jesus.

The amazing things that Jesus does even today should be opportunities for people to come to faith in Him.

When God shows up in powerful ways in our lives, we should take advantage of the opportunity to share that with others for the sole purpose of furthering the Kingdom.

Maybe we are encouraging a believer that is struggling. Maybe we are witnessing to someone who is skeptical. Whatever the case may be, **we need to be on mission and see something that God does in our life as an opportunity to share the gospel with those around us.**

2. Faith Responds in Worship

So look again at our passage for this morning, verses 12-13.

It says that they heard that Jesus was coming and they came out to meet him with palm branches and worshipped him. There we see a faith response.

When we experience God's grace and mercy our only response should be to fall at his feet in worship.

The people were excited about Jesus coming and brought out palm branches which would have been more associated with the feast of Tabernacles in the Old Testament, but according to John MacArthur, "In the intertestamental period, however, palm branches became a general symbol of victory and celebration."

So they cry out to Jesus "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, The King of Israel."

The term Hosanna means “save now” which leads me to believe that in some way they were receiving him as the coming messiah. They also called him the King of Israel.

Coming back to John MacArthur he states, “In the past, the Lord had refused to be hailed at the king and military conqueror the people were sure the Messiah would be. In fact, He had dispersed the crowd that sought to make him king in John 6. But this time He accepted their acclamation sending them into a frenzy of excitement.”

Think about it from their perspective, they are finally getting what they want from the Messiah. They had been oppressed by the Romans and wanted a king that would stand up for them and fight for them. Jesus had a different fight in mind. Jesus was preparing for a battle, but it was a much different battle than the people had in mind. The palm branches being associated with victory and celebration would be fitting because we know the victory that would be won at the cross.

MacArthur went on to say, **“Jesus accepted their praise on His terms. As one who came to save, the one who came in the name of the Lord, and the rightful king of Israel.”**

We have said it many times, but while the people wanted a conquering King, Jesus came as a suffering servant with the sole purpose of coming to seek and save the lost. **Luke 19:10 “For the Son of Man came to seek and save that which was lost.”**

We get that way sometimes with Jesus today. We are blessed as believers that can approach the throne of grace with confidence as Hebrews 4:12 tells us. However, we tend to look for a god of our own making, or treat God like a supernatural vending machine. It just doesn't work like that. We need to understand that God has a plan and is working it out for his good. We need to stop trying to make our own way and get in line with what his will is.

This should impact our prayer life, as we have discussed in the past that prayer is for us to align our will to God's will. As we pray, we need to pray for what God would want even in the midst of a trial or struggle. Remember God's sovereignty and trust in him.

3. Jesus On A Mission

The people wanted Jesus to do something for them, but again, he was on a mission. Read John 12:14-15 with me.

14 Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: 15 “Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey’s colt.”

Merril Tenney said this, **“He did not come as a conqueror but as a messenger of peace. He rode on a donkey, not the steed of royalty, but that of a commoner on a business trip.”**
(Tenney)

I love the idea of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem as a business trip. Not a vacation, not some wandering journey, a trip with a purpose.

Kobe Bryant, one of the fiercest competitors on the basketball court, once gave an interview that stuck with me. It was the 2009 NBA Finals and the Lakers had just won their second game in a row. In the interview Kobe was asked if he was upset, or why wasn’t he happy, his response was, “what is there to be happy about, job’s not done yet.”

He was such a focused athlete that nothing, not even enjoying a victory, would stand in his way of reaching his ultimate goal of winning a championship.

In the same way, Jesus entering Jerusalem had a singular focus. Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey is a fulfillment of prophecy in Zechariah 9:9, but also as a way of showing his character and his mission. If he had truly been a conquering king he would have ridden in on a stallion, a strong horse that would have set him above the people around him. As a servant riding in on a donkey, he is clearly communicating what he came for. Not to conquer, but to save everyone.

Jesus understood that he was entering town on a mission. Nothing could deter him from his main focus. He was on a mission. **Anything that would distract or take away from that needed to be cast aside so he could run the race laid out before him.**

Hebrews 12:1-2 Says,

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses.

This passage comes right after the section of scripture that we call the Hall of Faith. When we see the examples of all of these heroes of the faith, they should be something that encourages us as believers. Think about how encouraging it is when you hear someone's testimony. It always blesses me when I hear stories of how someone acted in faith and how God blessed their obedience.

We as believers should be encouraging each other as we run the race of faith. This life can be tough, this life can be filled with trials and we are called to encourage each other and build each other up. Proverbs 27:17 says, "As Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." We should be sharpening each other as we run this race.

We are called to throw off everything that hinders and the sins that so easily entangle us. I've been thinking about what these things can be.

Anything that takes our focus away from our main mission as believers needs to be thrown off and cast aside.

This can be a habit that we have, this can be a mentality, this can even be a relationship that we put before Christ. We have to understand what our mission is, Just like Jesus did.

I saw this quote from a missions organization called Mission Discovery, so I stole it

“Our mission as Christians is nothing short of incredible. It’s a mission that calls us to live out our faith in every aspect of our lives and to spread the love of Christ with every step we take. It’s about being agents of change, living embodiments of grace, and illuminating the darkest corners.”

Our mission is to love God first and foremost, and then to love others. John 15:12 tells us to love one another as Christ has loved us.

So anything that hinders our ability to accomplish that mission, from running the race with endurance needs to be cast off.

Again the imagery of a runner preparing to run a race, get’s rid of everything that has any weight to it in an effort to be as light and fast as possible. In cross country we would wear racing flats which I always described as socks with a sole. Even our shoes were made in a way to be as light as possible.

Jesus even rebuked Peter, one of his closest followers in Matthew 16. Jesus is predicting his death and when Peter says, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” Jesus’ response is amazing to me.

“But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”

Peter was so protective of Jesus that he couldn’t even fathom Jesus dying. He wouldn’t let it happen, NOT ON MY WATCH Peter would probably say. Jesus rebukes him, calling him a stumbling block. What a powerful phrase. What a powerful rebuke. To call Peter, the rock on which Jesus would build his church, a stumbling block. That had to cut to the heart of Peter.

For us, how often do we have our mind set on the things of this world rather than what our main mission is as believers.

Philippians 3:13-14 says

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Press on toward the goal. Press on towards following Christ and what HE has called you to do, forgetting the past life, forgetting the things that weigh us down.

Jesus had this laser focus, he understood what was coming. Look back at Hebrews 11:2 **looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

As he enters Jerusalem, he knows where he is going. He knows what is coming. For the joy that was set before him? Jesus looked at the cross and knew what it meant for us.

David Guzik notes, **“Jesus did not regard the cross itself as a joy. But He could look past the horror of the cross to enjoy the joy beyond it.”**

This is the mentality we should have when we face obstacles in our walk with Christ. James 1:2-3, a verse we all know but maybe don't enjoy so much.

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.”

We have to know that our trials produce something. Just like Jesus, in this walk towards the cross understood that his suffering would produce something. Knowing the cross would make a way for us. That is how he could have joy even while knowing the cross was coming.

What is amazing, we as Christians get to see the whole story laid out before us. We see the celebration of Jesus coming into Jerusalem, and we see the celebration coming on resurrection Sunday. What we can't forget is the pain and suffering to come on Good Friday.

Palm Sunday is a great chance to remember that Jesus not only came to save us, but he came knowing what was coming and took it for us anyways.

4. Practical Application

So for us, we have all heard Palm Sunday messages about Jesus riding in on a donkey, palm branches all over the road and what not, but what is the takeaway for us.

I believe it is all about focusing on our main mission as Christians. We were created for a purpose, with goals and things for us to accomplish.

Ephesians 2:10 says **“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”**

Jesus understood the mission given to him from the Father. That he was here on earth to make a way for us. God has prepared good works for us to do as well, so what are the things that hold us back from accomplishing what it is that God would have us do?

Is it a relationship? Is it a sin habit you can't seem to break? Whatever it is, cast it aside. Remember Hebrews 12:1 **“let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,”**

At the end of the day I want to be able to say what Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7, **“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.”**

Jesus, on Good Friday, as we heard a few weeks ago, said “It is Finished” The work is complete. For us, the job isn't finished.

So if the job isn't finished, if there is still something for us to accomplish we are called to get after it. If you are trying to figure out what that is for you, seek the Lord. Seek his wisdom. Walking in God's will and serving him brings the greatest joy in life.

If you have breath in your lungs this morning it means that God isn't done with you yet. So my prayer for us is that we would go, and be on mission.