

**The Word Became Flesh**  
**Week 36**  
**John 12:9-26 (CSB)**  
**“Crowds”**

**Introduction**

**“But you”, He asked them, “Who do you say that I AM?” (Mt 16:15; Mk 8:29; Lk 9:20)**

Following the banquet given in His honor at the house of Simon, Jesus began to make His way to Jerusalem. His hour had finally come. It was time to fulfill the mission for which He came. Just a few days hence He would be crucified for the sins of the world. But judging by the events that would take place in the coming days leading up to the Passover, this would be the last thing that anyone would have suspected. For it would have seemed to many that “the whole world” had decided to follow Him.

This is the way many people are, unfortunately. They can be on fire for something one day and ice cold the next. The mob tends to operate on its whims, rather than out of any sense of loyalty or lasting devotion. Many seem absolutely enthralled by the latest craze or shiny object, only to lose interest after a short while, and then they are on to the next new thing. Have you ever been to see a fireworks display? The people “ooh and aah”, so long as the rockets ignition continues in majestic display, but as soon as the echo of the last explosions have faded into the night, the crowd disperses and goes on about its daily concern. So it is with many when it comes to faith. They seem to start out on fire for The LORD only to disappear into the darkness shortly thereafter.

It is sad for me to read in the Gospels the descriptions of Jesus’ so-called “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem. For the very same mob that shouted “Hosanna” as He rode in, would be shouting “crucify” before the week was over. So much for the wisdom of the masses. As they were waving palm branches and shouting, The Son of God was actually weeping in sorrow over their lack of faith.

**As he approached and saw the city, He wept for it, saying “If you knew this day what would bring peace — but now it is hidden from your eyes. For the days will come on you when your enemies will build a barricade around you, surround you, and hem you in on every side. They will crush you and your children among you to the ground, and they will not leave one stone on another in your midst, because you did not recognize the time when God visited you.”**  
**Luke 19:41-44**

There is nothing but tragedy in store for those who fail to see The Savior for Who He is. The inhabitants of Jerusalem would find their city besieged and destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D., because they, as a whole, had failed to recognize The Son of God, when He rode into the gates of their city. They wanted a mighty conqueror astride a war horse to rescue them from Roman oppression. What they got was a suffering Savior on the colt of a donkey Who had come to deliver them from something much worse than the Romans. He came to deliver them from the bondage of sin, and they missed their opportunity to be reconciled to God. For:

**The one who believes in The Son has eternal life, but the one who rejects The Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him.**  
**John 3:36**

As we look at the crowd that gathered around Jesus in the city that day, we see three separate groups of people: **Foes**, **Fair-Weather Fans**, and genuine **Followers**. Ask The LORD to examine your heart today and help you to determine to which of those crowds you belong. Make sure that you are a true follower of Christ today, and do not fail to recognize the time when God visited... you!

**Foes (vs. 9-11, 19)**

**Then a large crowd of the Jews learned He was there. They came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, the one He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests had decided to kill Lazarus also, because he was the reason many of the Jews were deserting them and believing in Jesus.** **John 12:9-11**

When Christ made his entry into Jerusalem there was a convergence of two separate crowds that surrounded Him. The first crowd had gathered at the home of Simon, where the feast was given to honor Jesus. The Scriptures plainly tell us that they gathered there, not just to see The Savior, but also to see Lazarus, for the brother of Mary and Martha had become the talk of the entire region. After all, its not every day that someone is raised from the dead. Lazarus had become a local legend, and everyone came from miles around to see him for themselves. As we have previously discussed, never underestimate the powerful testimony of someone who has been brought from death unto life!

The second crowd had gathered in Jerusalem that week in preparation for the Passover. Many people had come from afar in order to worship and observe the sacred feast in the holy city. It is estimated that the crowds that year may well have been in excess of a million people. When Jesus rode into the city, the crowd that gathered to him in Bethany converged with the crowd at Jerusalem and the scene was quite dramatic. Many were caught up in a swell of hopeful emotion that day. The prevailing thought being that if this man from Galilee could indeed raise the dead, then there could be little doubt that He could also lead a successful rebellion against Rome. In their insatiable thirst for a conquering hero, they had missed out completely on God's plan.

**“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not My ways.” This is the LORD'S declaration. “For as heaven is higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”** **Isaiah 55:8-9**

In spite of the fact that some of the people had surrounded Jesus with impure motives, the fact that *any* at all had surrounded Him was a source of both anxiety and contempt for the religious leaders that made up the governing body of the Sanhedrin. They had already expressed their desire to see Jesus executed, but since the resurrection event at Bethany, they had also decided to put Lazarus to death as well. After all, if you do not like the message, you not only need do away with the messenger, but also bury the evidence (literally *and* figuratively speaking). Lazarus was a living breathing testimony of the power of Jesus. The religious leaders needed to remove him from public display, if they wanted the crowds to disperse. Or so they believed.

I never cease to be amazed at the wickedness of men, nor the lengths they will go to in order to get what they desire. Just this week, I have been appalled at the raging mobs around the country that are protesting, demanding that it is their constitutional and “God-given right” to exterminate an unborn child in the womb. How did we get to such a place where we believe that God has given us leave to do whatever we please, whether it breaks His Commandments or no? The murderous Sanhedrin wanted both Jesus and Lazarus to die, so that they could continue to enjoy their own selfish way of living. We look upon their wickedness with contempt, and yet, we somehow fail to see that selfsame wickedness prevailing all around us. We justify murder, for the sake of our own convenience. And we wonder why our nation is coming under the judgment of God?

Lazarus' resurrection was especially troublesome for the more liberal wing of the Sanhedrin, the Sadducees, including their High Priest, Caiaphas, for it was this group of the ruling court of the Jews that denied the reality of the resurrection. Rather than rethink their tenuous position, they decided to get rid of all evidence to the contrary. These men would have done well in a city such as Washington D.C., where the truth is more often than not merely a lie undiscovered. I cannot imagine denying the resurrection of the dead, after Lazarus had become living breathing proof of the fact, corroborated by many credible eyewitnesses! But, that is exactly what the Sadducees had done. This is exactly the same as those who reject Jesus to this very day. They are the foes (enemies) of God, because they refuse to accept the

evidence He has given, preferring that it simply disappear, rather than believe, repent and be forgiven. Therefore, the wrath of God remains upon them.

The more conservative Pharisees, who did in fact believe in the resurrection, went along with the evil schemes of the Sadducees simply because they too had much to lose if everyone abandoned them and went over to Jesus. When they saw the crowds they also became completely unhinged.

**Then the Pharisees said to one another, "You see? You've accomplished nothing. Look, the whole world has gone after Him!"** **John 12:19**

This was hyperbole of course, for the *whole world* had not in fact "gone after Jesus". But in many ways, it was a telling prophecy, for there would be many from all over the world who would indeed place their faith in the One that so many in Israel had despised and rejected. Perhaps that is why that John points out the small group of Greek believers that asked for an audience with Jesus, immediately following this quote from the Pharisees (**John 12:20-22**). It is a perfect example of the fulfillment of the prophecy of **Psalm 118**:

**The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This came from The LORD; it is wondrous in our sight. This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.** **Psalm 118:22-24**

#### **Fair Weather Fans (vs. 12-15)**

**The next day, when the large crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, they took palm branches and went out to meet Him. They kept shouting:**

**"Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord —the King of Israel!"**

**Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written:**

**Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion. Look, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt.**

**(John 12:12-15)**

...Not the "Jesus" I wanted...

When a Roman general would return to Rome after a successful military campaign, a large precessional would be organized to the last detail. The general would ride ahead of the procession on a powerful steed. In his wake would be a train of captives that he had brought back to become slaves of the empire. There would be lavish gifts, the spoils of war, that he would present to the emperor as tribute. All the citizenry would turn out to cheer the conquering hero.

Many Roman officials would have been present that day, as Jesus rode into Jerusalem. When they saw Him sitting astride not even a fully grown donkey, but rather a donkey's colt, with His feet practically touching the ground as He rode, they would not have felt very intimidated by this One being hailed as "The King of The Jews". In fact, more than likely they would have been amused by Him, rather than feeling threatened. It should have been plain to everyone that this man had not come to overthrow the government, and yet, that is what the fickle crowd had desired of Him.

The shouts of "Hosannah" (save now) and "Blessed is He Who comes The Name of The LORD" that were offered up by the crowd that day are from **Psalm 118**, which is part of a group of hymns that were commonly known as The Egyptian Hallel (**Psalm 113-118**). These songs were sung during every Passover, as the Jews would teach their children of how God delivered their nation from Egyptian bondage during the time of Moses.

The people were hoping for someone to break the yoke of Roman bondage, just as Moses had delivered the nation, so many centuries ago, from its Egyptian tormentors. This is the type of Messiah,

Savior that they wanted. They were not at all interested in the “Suffering Servant” that Isaiah spoke of in his prophecies (**Isaiah 53**). They failed to understand that the Messiah that God had sent was there to deliver them from the bondage of sin. And this is why they went from waving palm branches and shouting “Hosannah” on Monday to the shaking of their fists and screaming “Crucify” on Friday. If He wasn’t there to do what *they* wanted, then they had no further need of Him. What a tragedy.

If the people that day, who were gathered in the city to worship God, had only paid a bit more attention to the Word of God, then they could have recognized their deliverer. It should have been obvious to them that He wasn’t coming to overthrow the government by the method of transport that was prophesied in regards to His coming.

**Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout in triumph Daughter Jerusalem! Look, your King is coming to you; He is righteous and victorious, HUMBLE and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. Zechariah 9:9** (emphasis added)

Now what kind of warrior rides in on a baby donkey? Even the disciples had missed the point at the time! But after Jesus’ resurrection, they looked back on all of these things and saw the truth (**John 12:16**). Everyone there should have realized by a thorough examination of God’s Word, that the coming Messiah had to be quite a bit different from what this world would expect from a deliverer, but they missed the point entirely. And when He did not meet their expectations, they quickly turned against Him. They were fair-weather fans.

Many today are much the same. They like “portions” of the Biblical Jesus, but they choose to discount others. For example, they absolutely love the Jesus that says, **“Judge not that ye be not judged” (Matthew 7:1 KJV)**. Or, **“This is My command: Love one another as I have loved you.” (John 15:12)**. But when that very same Jesus says things like:

**“No, I tell you: but unless you repent, you will all perish as well.” Luke 13:5**

Or

**“I say to you, my friends, don’t fear those who kill the body, and after that can do no more. But I will show you the One to fear: Fear Him Who has authority to throw people into hell after death. Yes, I say to you, this is the One to fear! Luke 12:4-5**

It is “this Jesus” that the wicked are not so fond of. He is the One Who says to us that unless we turn away from sin and take up our cross to follow Him, then we will face God’s judgement. This Jesus is not so popular. He isn’t the kind of Savior that this world wants. And so they have, by and large, rejected Him for a “Jesus” of their own invention. And just as the mob in Jerusalem would choose Barabbas, a convicted murderer, over Jesus, this world chooses its own false messiahs over The Son of God each and every day. Such is the modus operandi of the fair-weather fan. As soon as things get a bit difficult for them to hear, they are off to the next would-be prophet, who tells them what their itching ears *want* to hear (**2 Timothy 4:1-4**).

#### **Followers (vs. 16-26)**

**His disciples did not understand these things at first. However, when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.**

**Meanwhile, the crowd, which had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify. This is also why the crowd met him, because they heard he had done this sign. Then the Pharisees said to one another, “You see? You’ve accomplished nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!”**

**Now some Greeks were among those who went up to worship at the festival. So they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and requested of him, "Sir, we want to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.**

**Jesus replied to them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces much fruit. The one who loves his life will lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me. Where I am, there My servant also will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor Him."** (John 12:16-26)

As stated previously, I believe that John mentions the Greek delegation that wanted to meet Jesus as a followup to the declaration that was given by the Pharisees: **"The whole world is going after Him!"** In a sense, this statement was true, for there are now followers of Jesus throughout the entire world, simply because He was despised and rejected by His own. He died for the sins of this world, and many, as a result, have chosen to become His followers. In fact, it was because of some true followers of Christ that the Greek worshippers came to learn of Him in the first place.

Those who had witnessed the raising of Lazarus were faithful to share of Christ's power with any who would listen. It was these faithful witnesses, who had followed Him into Jerusalem, and had gone about sharing their testimony. They were doing what The Church has been commissioned to do. They were going about the city making disciples.

It can be assumed that these Greeks, who had forsaken their own false religions to worship the One true God, had approached Phillip that day because he not only had a Greek name, but probably spoke their language. And he, along with Andrew, had subsequently brought them to Jesus. What a beautiful example of discipleship! We, too, are to find those who are seeking the truth and introduce them to The Savior.

Those Greek worshippers may have even witnessed Jesus throwing over the tables in the Court of The Gentiles, for that would have been the only place where they were allowed to gather. Being Gentiles, they would not have been permitted to go into any of the inner courts that were set apart for only the Jews. Perhaps these men had been impressed when they saw that Jesus cared enough about *their* worship that He expelled those wicked moneychangers who were causing such a distraction. Who knows? But one thing is for certain, if these Greeks had been seeking an encounter with The One True God, a visit with Jesus was exactly what they needed!

Jesus' response to those Greeks, as well as, to any who choose to come to Him was simple. You cannot stay where you are and go with God. Therefore, if you would follow Christ, then Christ is to become the sole purpose for your life. Just as He would die on the cross, so that others may live. We, too, must die to self in order to make any lasting difference. To live **with** Christ, is to live **as** Christ.

Jesus used a metaphor that every farmer would understand. A single seed must die and be buried in order to produce a harvest. Jesus died, was buried, and rose again, and those throughout this world who have come to believe in Him are the harvest. He was the "firstfruits", as Paul says, of the harvest that was to come (**1 Corinthians 15:20**). **We** are that harvest. And if we are His true followers, we must offer up all that we are in order to increase the harvest. The purpose of The Church is to make disciples. This is exactly what the witnesses at Lazarus tomb were doing, and this is exactly what Philip and Andrew did. They brought people to Jesus.

Are you a follower of Christ today? Are you bringing lost souls into the kingdom, so that they too can receive everlasting life? Or are you a fair-weather follower? Which "crowd" are you a part of? Are you living a life of worship that brings honor to the Biblical Jesus, or are you hoping for a different kind of Messiah, one who will do for you as *you* please, rather than the other way around? Are you following Jesus, or are you hoping that Jesus will follow you? Listen carefully to His words and make your choice today.

**If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me. Where I am, there My servant also will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor Him."** **John 12:26**

And let the followers say... TRUTH!!!