

JOHN

Chapter 12

Mary Anoints Jesus at Bethany

Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2 So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. 3 Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 4 But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, 5 “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” 6 He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. 7 Jesus said, “Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. 8 For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.**”**

12:1–11 All four Gospels have an account of a woman anointing Jesus. John’s account seems to tell of the same incident recorded in Mt 26:6–13 and Mk 14:3–9, while that in Lk 7:36–50 is different. (CSB)

12:1 *six days* - Saturday before Holy Week. (TLSB)

Jesus came - John reminds the reader to view Jesus’ trip to Bethany in light of the immediately preceding events. (TLSB)

12:2 *gave a dinner* - Probably a Sabbath dinner, held either in mid-afternoon or after sunset. (TLSB)

12:3 *nard*. The name of both a plant and the fragrant oil it yielded. Since it was very expensive, Mary’s act of devotion was costly. It was also an unusual act, both because she poured the oil on Jesus’ feet (normally it was poured on the head) and because she used her hair to wipe them (a respectable woman did not unbind her hair in public). Further, it showed her humility, for it was a servant’s work to attend to the feet. (CSB)

Aromatic oil made from the crushed rhizomes of the spikenard plant, native to northern India; used as a herbal medicine. Called “pure” presumably because of its exceptional quality. (TLSB)

anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. This was highly unusual. Mary’s actions (anointing feet, not head; wiping off oil with hair) signified her humble devotion to her Savior. Cf 13:3–5. (TLSB)

hair. Women typically had long hair and wore it braided or pinned up. (TLSB)

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Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance

of the perfume. (John 12:3)

Put yourself in Mary's place. It hadn't been that long since she was weeping for her dead brother Lazarus at Jesus' feet. Jesus raised him from the dead, and now the family was giving a dinner party in His honor. How could she ever find a way to thank Him?

Martha did it through cooking and serving the dinner -- that was her gift. But Mary wanted to do something else. So she brought out a treasure -- a flask of pure nard ointment, which was probably the most expensive thing they had in the house. Then she poured it over Jesus' head and feet (see Mark 14:3, John 12:3). Finally, she knelt to wipe His feet dry with her hair -- unthinkable for a Jewish woman.

Why do this? Anointing was a custom they had for honored guests. It was also the way priests were ordained and kings were installed as rulers. The very name "Messiah" (or "Christ") means "the Anointed One." Perhaps all these things were in her heart as she honored Jesus.

When we think about what Jesus has done for us, we find ourselves in Mary's dilemma. How can we thank Him for what He has done? He sought us out, called us to be His own, laid down His life to save us, rose from the dead to give us everlasting life -- how can we ever love Him enough? It hurts trying to express such feelings. And so we look around for some action, some way to say "Thank You. I love You," when words fail us.

Thanks be to God, Jesus has given us ways to express that love. He has given us Baptism and the Lord's Supper. He has given us our neighbors, even the lowliest, and promised that "as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40b).

John tells us that the house was filled with the fragrance of the nard. As we seek to love the Lord like she did, may the world be filled with the fragrance of our own thank offerings.

THE PRAYER: I love You, Lord. Strengthen my love for You, and let it show in my actions. Amen. **12:5** *three hundred denarii*. Nearly the yearly wages of a common laborer. (TLSB)

12:5 *given to the poor* - Jesus commended almsgiving in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 6:2-4), and the disciples assumed Jesus would give money to the needy at the Passover Feast. (TLSB)

12:6 *a thief*. The one passage from which we learn that Judas was dishonest. Yet he must have been thought to be a man of some reliability, for he was keeper of the money bag. (CSB)

Judas carried or kept the moneybag or purse (a treasurer of sorts). Funds were used not only to take care of the expenses of the disciples but also to help those in need (13:29). (TLSB)

12:7 *keep it*. Probably the meaning is "save for this purpose." Perfume was normally associated with festivity, but it was also used in burials (see 19:39-40), and Jesus links it with his burial, which Mary's act unwittingly anticipates. (CSB)

Obviously, it was too late for the oil to be kept in the bottles and then sold to replenish the moneybag. Jesus here speaks in abbreviated form, saying that Mary was right to keep the oil for such an occasion. (TLSB)

12:1–8 In humble devotion, yet with extravagant expense, Mary anoints Jesus, while Judas the betrayer and thief covers his greed with seemingly pious intentions. Sinners may appear to have pure motives, but inwardly they have greedy hearts. Through repentance and the blessings of the Word, God grants us pure hearts. No monetary value can be placed on our “redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses” (Eph 1:7). • O Lord, may we follow Mary’s example by lavishing love on Him who died for us! Amen. (TLSB)

The Plot to Kill Lazarus

9 When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. 10 So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, 11 because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

12:9 *Jews.* Not all Jews were hostile to Jesus. No doubt some were pilgrims who had come to the Passover Feast. (TLSB)

12:10 The Jewish leaders previously had spoken of the death of one man (11:50), but now they wanted another death. Sin grows. (CSB)

12:11 *believing in Jesus* - Many left the chief priests and other Jewish leaders to follow Jesus. (TLSB)

12:9–11 Jesus’ popularity grows as crowds hear about the raising of Lazarus, but the chief priests plot against Jesus and Lazarus. Those who hate Christ also hate His friends. But Jesus deserves praise (Php 2:10), for He came to bring life to all, and He will mercifully watch over us. • Dear Lord, change the hearts of all who hate You so that they may trust in Your mercy. Amen. (TLSB)

The Triumphal Entry

12 The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 13 So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” 14 And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, 15 “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!” 16 His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. 17 The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. 18 The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”

12:12-24 John 12 narrates the close of Jesus’ public ministry. His triumphal entry is perhaps the most spectacular event in the public view. Its importance is emphasized by its inclusion in all four gospels. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

The climax of Jesus’ mission is at hand (Jn 12:23). The people shout their praises, acknowledging Jesus to be their King. The scene is reminiscent of Ps 24:7–9, where the King of Glory is

welcomed in splendor. Psalm 24 is singularly appropriate for the occasion because its subject is the ascent to God's holy place—the pilgrimage of the crowds to Jerusalem on Passover, and ultimately, Christ's ascension, and also the reception of God's saints into heaven. Who is worthy to approach God? The psalm's answer is he who has clean hands and a pure heart (v 4)—the sinless Christ himself! Jesus approaches God on our behalf. Then he enables us to follow as we are cleansed and purified by the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb. Our Lord is none other than the King of Glory, the Savior from whom we receive blessing and righteousness (Ps 24:5; NIV and RSV translate *tsədaqah* “righteousness” as “vindication”). Following in his train, the very gates of heaven are opened to us! This is the highest reason to “hail the King!” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

Jn 11:55 sets the theological and chronological stage for our text: right before Passover, the celebration of God's ultimate OT saving act, foundational for Israel's faith. Israel was “baptized” (1 Cor 10:2), dying to her former way of life and rising to new life as God's covenant people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 5, Part 2)

Jn 11:57 adds an important fact: the chief priests and Pharisees were seeking to arrest Jesus. The prelude to their plot includes the resurrection of Lazarus, mentioned also in 12:9–11 and in v 18 of our text. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 5, Part 2)

John 12 begins with Jesus in Bethany, the town of Lazarus, where the Lord is anointed by Mary (v 3) in preparation for his death (v 7). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 5, Part 2)

Our text is followed by the Greeks who come seeking Jesus. His response is a prediction of his “glorification,” referring paradoxically to his passion. His death will be for the redemption of the whole world, and the inclusion of the Greeks here points toward the later mission to the Gentiles. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 5, Part 2)

Jesus had arrived at Bethany on Friday. The dinner, the anointing, and the gathering of the crowd took place after His arrival, with the Sabbath (Friday dusk to Saturday dusk) intervening. (PBC)

12:12, 17-18 In these verses there appear to be three groups who make up the crowd, or multitude. Those identified in v 12 are the pilgrims “that had come to the feast.” V 17 describes another group, possibly a subset of the pilgrims of v 12, but specifically those who had witnessed the raising of Lazarus from the dead. This latter group appears to spread throughout the populace of Jerusalem, sharing their account of the great miracle they had seen. This results in the gathering of the third group described in v 18, who turn out to see the one who is reputed to have worked such a stupendous deed. Thus the raising of Lazarus continues to cause a commotion, not only among those who acclaim Jesus for the miraculous deed (Jn 11:45; 12:9), but also among those who are more determined than ever to eliminate the one who performed the miracle (Jn 11:46–53, 57; 12:10–11, 19). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 2)

12:12 *great crowd*. Pilgrims who had come up from the country for the Passover Feast. Many of the pilgrims had doubtless seen and heard Jesus in Galilee, and they welcomed the opportunity to proclaim him as Messiah. (CSB)

As Jesus and those with him made their way into Jerusalem, they were met by a great crowd of people composed of the many pilgrims who had come for the Passover and were camping along the roadway leading to Jerusalem. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 5, Part 2)

It is “the next day” after the anointing at Bethany (v 1). The “great crowd” that assembled in Jerusalem each year for Passover was immense; Josephus estimated over 2 million people (L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971] 538, note 35). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

The crowd was composed of people who had come from many areas (v 19: “whole world”), Galilee in particular. It was among these that much of Jesus’ ministry had taken place, and this accounts for their irrepressible enthusiasm. Up until now Jesus had refused to allow himself to be acclaimed Messiah or King (Jn 6:15, etc.). Now he permitted their acclamation. Their pent-up fervor and excitement practically exploded. Finally, they thought, the long-awaited Deliverer had arrived. Probably none in the throng anticipated that his coronation would not be with a gold crown, but with a crown of thorns. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

12:13 *palm branches*. Used in celebration of victory. John saw a multitude with palm branches in heaven (Rev 7:9). (CSB)

Those who greeted Jesus took palm branches and went out to meet him. In 2 Macc 10:7, palm branches were used in the rededication of the temple in 164 B.C. When Simon Maccabeus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem in 141 B.C., palms were used as a national symbol of victory: “the Jews entered the citadel [of Jerusalem] with praise and palm branches, and with harps and cymbals and stringed instruments, and with hymns and songs, because a great enemy had been crushed and removed” (1 Macc 13:51). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 5, Part 2)

The greeting of the crowd reflects the words of Ps 118:25–26. This liturgical psalm may have been used at the feast of the dedication of the temple during the time of Ezra and also in the later Maccabean period (Ezra 6:15 ff.; 1 Macc 4:5; 2 Macc 10:1). In today’s text, the words proclaim the blessedness of Jesus. “Hosanna,” Hebrew for “Save now!” was an exclamation of praise for the Savior. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 5, Part 2)

John alone tells us that the crowd used palm branches. Palms were to be used in the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:40). Later they were used on other festival occasions (1 Macc 13:51; 2 Macc 10:7). Palms represented victory and salvation. Some Jewish coins of the NT era had palms and the inscription, “the redemption of Zion” (Morris, p. 584, note 39). The multitude of saints in heaven who stand before God’s throne in Rev 7:9–10 hold palms as they sing praises for their salvation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

Palm trees grew plentifully near Jerusalem and had become a Jewish national symbol, appearing on Judean coins. (TLSB)

The use of palm branches by the crowd expresses acclaim to a conqueror or liberator of the Jews. Simon the Maccabee was honored for his victory over the occupying Syrian forces around 141 BC with the waving of palm branches (1 Macc 13:51). Palm branches were also used to celebrate the rededication of the temple in 165 BC (2 Macc 10:7). Palm fronds became a national symbol of Judea, appearing on the coins minted by the Jewish nationalists during the war with Rome (AD 66–70). This evidence indicates the nationalistic significance that palm branches held in the minds of Jews at this time. Accordingly, their waving of the palm fronds on Palm Sunday possibly indicates an expectation that Jesus will achieve their nationalistic hope of liberation from the Romans. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 2)

Hosanna! A Hebrew expression meaning “Save!” which became an exclamation of praise.); both prayer and praise. – Prayer for the Lord to continue to save and sustain his people. (CSB)

Lit, “help” or “save, I pray.” Plea for divine help or deliverance found frequently in Ps 113–18 (the Hallel), psalms for morning prayer. It became a general acclamation. (TLSB)

“Hosanna!” is the prayer *hoshi‘ah na’!* “Save [us], please,” from Ps 118:25. The prayer became an exclamation of praise, since it implies that the one so hailed has the power and grace to save. The context shows that by this shout Jesus certainly was acclaimed as God’s anointed Savior, the one who comes in the Lord’s name and with the power of the Lord of Hosts—both heavenly and earthly armies. He is “blessed” by his Father, and the one through whom the Father dispenses his blessings to us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

The cry of “Hosanna” (Greek *hōsanna*, Hebrew *hoshiy‘ah na’*) was originally a plea for salvation. But already by the first century AD it had become a term of praise and acclaim. It was well-known by the Jews because of its use in Ps 118:25, which was part of the Hallel (Psalms 113–118), sung, among other occasions, during Passover. The Midrash on Ps 118:26 (“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD”) pronounces this blessing on the Davidic king (*Midrash Tehillim* 244a). It is likely that this is the intent of the crowds at Palm Sunday, especially since they explicitly add “Blessed is the *King of Israel*” (v 13 NIV, emphasis added), which is not a quotation from Psalm 118. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 2)

the name. In ancient times an individual’s “name” summed up his whole person. (CSB)

From psalm 118 note – *who comes in the name of the LORD.* The one who with God’s help had defeated the enemies “in the name of the LORD.”)

Blessed is the King of Israel! The people’s addition to the words of the psalm, which John alone records. It reflects his special interest in Jesus’ royalty, which he brings out throughout the passion narrative. (CSB)

The “King of Israel” occurs only one other time in the gospel: Jn 1:49, when Nathanael greets Jesus as Israel’s king. Interestingly, only John’s gospel tells us that the people once sought to make Jesus king (6:15), and that Jesus was acclaimed King on Palm Sunday (12:13, 15; but cf. Mk 11:10). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 5, Part 2)

The understanding of the Messiah as “the coming one” apparently was widespread in Jesus’ day (Jn 4:25; Mt 11:3). This concept has two applications—to Christ’s two Advents. At his trial Jesus himself spoke of his “coming” again on the clouds of heaven in glory (Mt 26:64). The preacher can tie these two together by stressing that we who in faith acclaim Jesus now are prepared for his return in glory. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

The title “King of Israel” echoes Nathanael in Jn 1:49. But when Pilate presented Jesus as Israel’s king, the crowds shouted for his death (Jn 19:14–15). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

12:14-15 While the other gospels describe the role of the disciples, John emphasizes that Jesus is the one who finds the donkey. Throughout John’s gospel. Jesus is the primary actor as he carries

out his mission (compare also Jn 19:17 to the synoptics). This is in itself a sign of messiahship. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 5, Part 2)

Like v 13, v 15 again speaks of Christ's kingship, and v 14 quotes the words of Zech 9:9, pointing to a distinctive mark of Christ's kingship. The donkey is not normally used by a warlike person but is the animal of a man of peace, a priest, or a merchant. In highlighting the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy of a gentle/meek king, John emphasizes that Jesus was not the warrior-king of popular expectation who would drive out the Romans, but a servant King who would lay down his life for all. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 5, Part 2)

Jesus purposefully chooses to enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey. The accounts in the synoptic Gospels reinforce that Jesus intentionally set up his mode of transportation into Jerusalem at this event (Mt 21:1–6; Mk 11:1–7; Lk 19:28–35). The significance of this choice is threefold: First, Jesus identifies himself as one of the royal line of David. The kings of Judah rode donkeys as a hallmark of their descent from King David. For example, in 1 Ki 1:33–34, 38, Solomon was demonstrated to be the heir to the throne by being seated on David's donkey. Second, Jesus identifies himself as one who comes in peace. A warlike king or conqueror would most likely ride a stallion. A king or important person who enters a city on a donkey indicates that he has come for peaceful purposes. Third, John identifies this with the fulfillment of a prophecy regarding the Messiah, specifically Zech 9:9, which is quoted in v 15. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 2)

12:14 donkey. While the other gospels offer details about the acquisition of the donkey, John simply stresses the fulfillment of prophecy. "Fear not" often are the first words spoken by angels in gracious visitations, and by Jesus himself too. The original words from Zech 9:9 are even more positive: "Rejoice greatly." The reason Zion should not fear is that her King comes not on a war horse, nor on foot as a general leading his troops, but as the Prince of Peace. Donkeys were commonly ridden by priests, merchants, and others, including persons of importance, but usually for peaceable purposes. The following context in Zech 9:9–11 fills out our understanding of the donkey-riding King as humble and bringing peace; his dominion extends over the whole earth. But strikingly, Zech 9:13–15 then abruptly returns to war imagery as God's people annihilate their enemies. We relate this to the two Advents—the first in humility, the second in glory and judgment. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

12:15 donkey's colt – Israelite kings rode beasts of burden (1 Kg. 1:38), but by Roman times, the usual royal mount was a horse. This signified that Christ came in humility and peace. (TLSB)

12:16 An example of the meaning of 16:13. (CSB)

did not understand – His disciples were slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken (Luke 24:25), but no more so than we would have been. Hindsight is 20/20, or at least better than foresight. In heaven, as we "hail the King," perhaps we too will look back in amazement at how dense we were and how much trouble we had understanding things God had revealed so clearly in Scripture (cf 1 Cor 13:12).

As in Jn 2:21–22, the significance of Jesus' words and actions became clear only in light of his resurrection. His disciples were slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Lk 24:25), but no more so than we would have been. Hindsight is 20/20, or at least better than foresight. In heaven, as we "hail the King," perhaps we too will look back in amazement at how dense we were and how much trouble we had understanding things God had revealed so clearly in

Scripture (cf. 1 Cor 13:12). This verse highlights the necessity of reading the Scriptures with eyes of faith, enlightened by the Spirit (Jn 16:13; contrast 1 Cor 2:14; Jn 12:19). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

The statement *tauta ouk egnōsan autou hoi mathētai to prōton*, “his disciples did not understand these things at first,” means that they failed to comprehend the *nature* of Jesus’ kingship. They especially did not understand that Jesus’ role as Messiah King would lead him to his suffering and death on the cross. They did not apprehend the divine plan of redemption until “after Jesus was glorified” (NIV). The key to the meaning of this reference to glorification is found in the passage immediately following this text, Jn 12:20–36. Here Jesus points to his death on the cross as “the hour . . . for the Son of Man to be glorified” (v 23). In this sacrificial act, the Father and the Son are most glorified, for at the cross God accomplishes his saving mission of drawing all men to himself (v 32). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 2)

glorified. Only after the crucifixion and the coming of the Holy Spirit did the disciples appreciate the meaning of the prophecy and its fulfillment. (CSB)

After Christ was crucified and raised from the dead, the disciples were able to understand how He had fulfilled prophecies. (TLSB)

written about Him. Christ’s actions fulfilled what the prophets said. (TLSB)

The crowd recognized Jesus as the messianic King, but at the time the disciples, by their own admission, were unable to understand the significance of what was taking place. Only after his crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit would the disciples fully comprehend the meaning of these events. Perhaps the verses from Psalm 118 and Zechariah quoted in our text were among those Jesus explained to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:27) or in another setting after his resurrection. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 5, Part 2)

12:17-19 Jesus began his journey on the donkey from Bethany, where he had raised Lazarus. Many of the Jews who earlier had traveled to Bethany to comfort Martha and Mary had also seen Jesus raise Lazarus (Jn 11:18–19). Now their continuing testimony (*emarturei*, durative imperfect) brought even more crowds to see the one who had done this sign. John uses *sēmeion*, “sign,” 17 times, 11 of which refer to Jesus’ miracles as pointing to God’s saving work and often leading to faith. Yet the significance of the “signs” is not always self-evident, and they can be rejected; grace is resistible, as v 19 shows. (On “sign” and related terms, see Morris, pp. 684–91.) The pessimistic complaints of the Pharisees contrast starkly with the crowd’s hosannas. The Pharisees were losing control. Jesus had become so popular it would be difficult to dispose of him. With a twist of irony John records their remark that “the whole world” has gone after Jesus. This may be an unconscious prophecy like Jn 11:49–52. The Christ had come to save the whole world, and his Gospel would reach the ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1:8; 17:6). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

12:17 *continued to bear witness* – The crowd could not stop talking about the great miracle that had taken place. (TLSB)

This verse helps us understand why Jesus was hailed as the messianic King even before he was “glorified” (v 16). We are introduced to a “crowd” (*ochlos*), the same word as in v 12, but apparently denoting a smaller group within the “great crowd” mentioned in v 12. This crowd

consisted of those who had themselves witnessed Jesus' raising of Lazarus. This group was witnessing (*emarturei*, durative imperfect indicating continuing action) to the "sign" (v. 18) they had seen Jesus perform. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 5, Part 2)

12:18 - A third occurrence of "crowd" refers to those coming out from Jerusalem in response to the witness of the second group. The verb *hupantaō*, "to meet," usually carries a friendly connotation, though occasionally it can denote a hostile confrontation (Lk 14:31). In colloquial English we might say they went to check out this person who reportedly had performed the "sign" (*sēmeion*)—a key Johannine word for an act that reveals Jesus' person and purpose. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 5, Part 2)

12:19 *are gaining nothing* – Another way of saying, "It's useless." Reveals the Pharisees' exasperation at Jesus' growing popularity. (TLSB)

Noticing the enthusiastic welcome given Jesus, the Pharisees express what they see as their failure to control a serious and growing problem: "The whole world has gone after him!" Like Caiaphas' statement in Jn 11:49–51, the words of the Pharisees imply the truth of who Christ is. In an ironic way, they too have "testified" that Jesus was sent into the world to save "the whole world." Their words serve to introduce the Greek representatives of the Gentile world who would also come to see Jesus in the next paragraph (12:20–26). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 5, Part 2)

The expression by the Pharisees that "the world has gone after him" may have a deeper significance than they intend. Just as the high priest Caiaphas says more than he intends in Jn 11:49–50 (and see John's comment in 11:51–52), so also John may purpose that the Pharisees' expression says more than they had in view. This is what D. A. Carson calls "superb Johannine irony" (*The Gospel According to John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 435; all quotations used by permission). In referring to *ho kosmos*, "the world," the Pharisees have in mind the crowd composed of the residents of Jerusalem as well as the pilgrims from abroad. But in the fourth Gospel, the world is the object of Christ's saving mission (Jn 3:16–17). As Carson puts it, "The crowd that acclaims Jesus as the King of Israel anticipates the broader sweep of humanity that will enjoy Jesus' saving reign" (Carson, 435). Just as the world is drawn to Christ at this Palm Sunday procession, even more so will it be drawn to him at his enthronement—and glorification—on the cross (Jn 12:32). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 2)

12:12–19 Riding on a donkey, Jesus enters Jerusalem on the Sunday of Passion Week. Leaders of the Jewish nation reacted as we often do when we are no longer in control: frustrated and fearful. But Christ comes in a humble and gentle manner, eager to listen to our prayers for salvation. • Hosanna! Please save us, O blessed Lord. Amen. (TLSB)

Some Greeks Seek Jesus

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. 21 So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. 23 And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 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. 25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

12:20-33 The mood of the text is one of somber anticipation. Chronologically, the text occurs between the triumphant entry into Jerusalem and Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet. The narrative is rapidly moving to the events of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, so there is an ominous expectancy in this passage. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

The intent of the text is to have the readers seek and serve (v 26) Jesus only as they are drawn to his hour of death, his glorification of being lifted up on a cross. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

12:20-23 It is the coming of the Greeks that is important, not only their conversation with Jesus. The Greeks were probably "God-fearers"—Gentiles attracted to Judaism but not ready to convert and accept the requirements of the Law such as Sabbath observance and circumcision. Some think they could have been actual converts or proselytes. Regardless, they came to worship in Jerusalem during the Passover celebration. On the Jewish Pentecost or Feast of Weeks, there were people in Jerusalem from "every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5) "both Jews and converts to Judaism" (Acts 2:11). The arrival of Gentiles seeking him prompts Jesus to declare that his hour has now come. It is time for him to be glorified in death and resurrection for the whole world. There is no turning back. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

Some commentators are of the opinion that this episode happened in the afternoon of Palm Sunday. It is found only in John and is found right after Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Others feel that it occurred on Tuesday morning, two days later. In any event, all agree that Jesus was in the Temple. (Buls)

12:20 *Greeks*. Probably "God-fearers," people attracted to Judaism by its monotheism and morality, but repelled by its nationalism and requirements such as circumcision. They worshiped in the synagogues but did not become proselytes. (CSB)

Probably Greek-speaking Gentiles from a place like the Decapolis. (TLSB)

Greeks" meaning Gentiles. "Who were among those who customarily went up." They were among the God-fearing Gentiles who worshipped in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover. Compare Acts 10:1.22.35; 13:16.26.43.50; 16:14; 17:4.17; 18:7. They came to worship. (Buls)

12:21 *Philip*. A Greek name, which may be why they came to this disciple (though he was not the only one of the Twelve to have a Greek name). (CSB)

Perhaps because Philip had a Gk name and came from an area near the Decapolis. (TLSB)

This is narrative. They must have been acquainted with Philip. Bengel suggests that perhaps they always lodged with Philip in Bethsaida on their journey to Jerusalem. They simply request to meet Jesus to become acquainted with Him. This request must have proceeded from faith, for they surely knew that the Jewish authorities hated Jesus. It has been suggested that perhaps these Greeks were in the crowd which went out to meet Jesus, John 12:13, but we don't know. (Buls)

They were acquainted with Philip, since his home was in Bethsaida, and they may have met him often in the North. (Kretzmann)

He was from out of town (Bethsaida, in northern Galilee), so they may have felt more comfortable approaching him. (PBC)

to see. Means “to have an interview with.” After v. 22 John records no more about these Greeks. He regarded their coming as important but not their conversation with Jesus. Jesus came to die for the world, and the coming of these Gentiles indicates the scope of the effectiveness of his approaching crucifixion. (CSB)

For that moment, the request was symbolic. They represented the Gentile nations and the fulfillment of the messianic promise of a light for the nations (Isaiah 60:3). It reveals the desires of people impressed by God’s law and made aware of God’s Messiah. It is the spirit of Christians to this day who never stop searching the Scriptures to learn of Him. (PBC)

12:22 For some reason, Philip hesitated to speak immediately with Jesus. Here Andrew showed the same missionary zeal he had shown earlier (1:41). (TLSB)

Many commentators quote Bengel who says at this point:

A prelude is here given of the kingdom of God which is about to pass from the Jews (exclusively) to the Gentiles. (Buls)

Farrar: When Jesus was born, Chaldeans from the East had sought His cradle, and now Greeks and sons of the West came to His cross. (Buls)

Fahling: In this request Jesus saw an indication of His glorification, which consisted in His being acknowledged by men of all nations, as had been prophesied. (Buls)

Hendriksen: Andrew and Philip, hesitating to *offend* the Greeks, also hesitating to *encourage* them, place the request of the Greeks before Jesus. (Buls)

Jesus had told His disciples not to go to the Gentiles, Matthew 10:5, and that He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Matthew 15:24. But Jesus Himself had foretold the bringing in of the Gentiles at John 10:16. John 12:20-22 reveals the Greeks, Philip, Andrew and Jesus as very tactful, but forthright nonetheless. A great truth is being introduced. Whether these Greeks actually met Jesus is not stated. (Buls)

Lenski: We hear nothing further about the Greeks. . . John is not telling the story of these Greeks but of Jesus.

12:23 *Jesus answered them* – This is apparently to Philip and Andrew rather than the Greeks. We are never told whether these Greeks met with Jesus, who is now fully focused on His challenges in Jerusalem. (TLSB)

The hour has come. The hour to which everything else led. (CSB)

The antecedent of is the two disciples. "The hour has come" in the sense of the occasion of Jesus' suffering and death was found at John 7:30; 8:20. At this point it occurs in John with greater frequency. Compare 12:27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1. The word "glorified" covers the suffering, death, resurrection and final ascension of the Son of man. The Son of man clothed God in splendor by His atoning work which brings the Gentiles into the Church. (Buls)

Until now, we have become accustomed to hearing that Jesus' hour had not yet come (7:30; 8:20). But now it had. He, the essence of humanity, had come to Jerusalem to die for the lost humanity and rise again in glory. Jesus came to sacrifice Himself for the salvation of the Greek as well as the Jews. (PBC)

glorified. Jesus was speaking about his death on the cross and his subsequent resurrection and exaltation (see notes on v. 41; 11:4; 13:31). (CSB)

12:24-26 The principle of the kernel of wheat is that it must die to produce fruit. Just so, Jesus must die. The fruit is those who look to Christ and eternal life. They refuse to satisfy their desires and needs apart from God's will and follow Jesus in humble service. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

12:24 *truly, truly I say to you* – Here is another "I tell you the truth," so frequent in John, (twenty-four times) introducing a very important statement. (Buls)

if it dies, it produces. The principle of life through death is seen in the plant world. The kernel must perish as a kernel if there is to be a plant. (CSB)

Now follow two present general statements which are axiomatic and paradoxical. To bring out the axiom add "ever" to each protasis and "always" to each apodosis. It is a principle of nature that if a seed does not die, there will be no fruit but that if it dies there will be much fruit. The point of comparison is clear, but applies to Jesus only. No other human being ever produced much fruit by dying, none other than Jesus Christ. His death brought much fruit, especially among the Gentiles. (Buls)

Here begins Jesus' answer to the request of the Greeks. He did not spend His time exchanging amenities with these visitors. He spoke truths for all generations of men. (Buls)

This emphasizes the necessity of Jesus' death as the way to glorification and the blessing of many disciples. According to the time reckoning in John, Jesus rose from the dead on the 16th of Nisan, the day barley firstfruits were offered at the temple. (TLSB)

Similarly, Jesus would not bear the fruit of His mission from God unless, He first died. All His miraculous signs had no eternal benefit without the miracle of the cross and the empty tomb. The Son of Man had to die for a spiritual harvest to come, the harvest of souls for eternity. (PBC)

Jesus' dying would have its effect on all who follow Him. We too in a sense must die. We don't die as a substitute for others as Jesus did. But in believing in Him as our Substitute, we die with Him. (PBC)

12:25 *the man who hates his life ... will keep it.* To love one's life here and now—to concentrate on one's own success—is to lose what matters (cf. Mt 16:24–25; Mk 8:34–35; Lk 9:23–24). Supremely, of course, the principle is seen in the cross of Jesus. (CSB)

Jesus applied the image in v 24 to the life of His followers (cf Mk 8:34). Idolatrous love of self brings a person under God's judgment. (TLSB)

Verse 24 applies to Jesus only. Verses 25-26 apply to all people, Jews and Gentiles. Note that both verses contain two statements each. The universal atonement underlies these two verses. Both verses contain warning and promise. (Buls)

In verse 25 Jesus is comparing two types of people, which include all human beings. On this verse cf. Luke 14:26-27. He is speaking of a selfish, temporal love. To love one's soul means to live for self-gratification and avoidance of suffering. "Hate" does not denote the hatred of the flesh but the hatred of the new man. This involves one immediately in repentance, faith, the new life, also suffering. Compare Matthew 16:25. (Buls)

Nothing frightens the Christian so much as the thought of losing his own soul. Nothing comforts the Christian quite so much as the preservation of his soul for everlasting life. (Buls)

Ylvisaker: To love is here the equivalent of holding on, clinging to, being unwilling to part with. To hate is to give up cheerfully, turn away, or separate from. (Buls)

Kretzmann: It is one of the demands of Christian discipleship that all followers of Christ die unto this present life, with all it has to offer, daily. Compare Matthew 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 17:33. (Buls)

Hendriksen: The solemn truth stated in verse 24 applies to Christ, to him alone. Nevertheless, there is an analogous principle which operates in the sphere of men. It is the one stated in verses 25 and 26. (Buls)

Lenski: The Christian is ready, contrary to his natural inclinations and desires in his life here on earth, to wound, grieve, deny, crucify, mortify self in repentance and sanctification. . . He shall thus get out of his natural life what God intends him to get and at the same time attain the life eternal. (Buls)

This is well said, because Jesus is not teaching asceticism. (Buls)

But herein is an admonition also for the disciples, who are pledged to follow their

When Jesus warns against loving our lives, He means putting this earthly life first. It's a warning against self-centeredness. Those who put all their affection on this life and what they can get out of it will one day die and lose it all. (PBC)

hates. Love for God must be such that all other loves are, by comparison, hatred. (CSB)

Semitic idiom indicating preference; the opposite of sinful self-adulation. (TLSB)

Note from TLSB Romans 9:13: *Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated*. Refers to the nations of Israel and Edom. The "love/hate" language emphasizes preference of one over another, not literal hatred (compare Gn 29:30 to 29:31).

Jesus means putting Him and the life He gives first. When we believe in Jesus and have eternal life in Him, worldly living loses its attraction. Everything worldly carries sin's taint and becomes hateful. (PBC)

12:26 Just as Christ was ready to face death, so must His disciples be, no matter who they are or where they come from. (TLSB)

Note that both of these conditional sentences are general, covering all instances, an open invitation to both Jews and Gentiles. He died for all. "Serves" here is wider in meaning than mere religious service. "Serve" is a twenty-four hour a day matter, which involves a person in constant use of Law and Gospel. "Must follow," though an imperative, is an invitation, an invitation to trust, serve, suffer. And then follows a wonderful promise. "Where -- there" are correlative adverbs of place. Read John 7:34 and 8:21 where Jesus warned His enemies that they would *not be able* to come. But here at John 12:26; 14:3; 17:24 He does not say "you will be able" because it is purely a gift of Jesus. (Buls)

In what sense will The Father honor the "service" of Jesus? Bengel suggests that this corresponds to verse 23, the glorification of the Son of man. Just as the Son of man was glorified through suffering, death and resurrection, so the server will be honored with final glorification. (Buls)

"My servant" is a fellow-heir with Christ, Romans 8:17. In verse 26 Jesus is not merely prophesying, but stating the certainty of everlasting life for the servant. (Buls)

Before we leave this section we refer to Solomon's prayer for the Gentiles at 1 Kings 8:41-43. In its highest sense, the prayer of Solomon was answered here in John 12:20-33 when these Greeks, as representatives of all Gentiles, were knocking at the door of the Kingdom, to use an expression from Stoeckhardt, who says: "The hour that Christ should enter into glory through His death was at hand, because the Gentiles were knocking at the door and desiring a portion of Christ's kingdom." (Buls)

12:20–26 When some Greeks want to see Jesus, He uses the occasion to proclaim His death and the fruit it will bear. Too often we are tempted to think that we are really "living" when we are indulging in life's sinful pleasures. Christ promises everlasting life to all who deny themselves and trust in Him. He shows us the meaning of abundant life. • O God, as Your baptized child, let me consider myself "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rm 6:11). Amen. (TLSB)

The Son of Man Must Be Lifted Up

27 "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." 29 The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." 30 Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. 31 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." 33 He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. 34 So the crowd answered him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" 35 So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. 36 While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light."

12:27 *troubled.* John's equivalent to the agony in Gethsemane described in the other Gospels. (CSB)

Christ knew that the moment of His death was at hand. (TLSB)

Note that four of these words are quoted from the LXX, Psalm 6:4 (3), a penitential Psalm. Psalm 6 is spoken by the penitent sinner because of his own sins. Here Jesus uses it because of what He is about to suffer because of all men's sins. "Is troubled" is perfect tense because Jesus' soul has been disturbed for some time but the intensity is growing as He approaches His death. Jesus announced His impending death at least three times (cf. Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22 for the first announcement). The first announcement occurred at least nine months before this time. (Buls)

By the way, the word "hour" including this instance, occurs seventeen times in John from this point on. In the majority of cases it has to do with His suffering and death. (It occurs here again twice in verse 31) (Buls)

"What shall I say" is deliberative subjunctive. It denotes deep emotion, not a mere request for information. KJV and NEB make the sentence a statement. The others make it a question, as does Nestle/Aland. It is surely a question: "Shall I say: 'Father, save me from this hour'?" AAT gives the sense: "Father, save Me from what is going to happen? No! I came to suffer this now." "No" is clearly "No!" The situation is much like in the Garden of Gethsemane, Matthew 26:38ff. (Buls)

"This reason" though it has no expressed antecedent, means "For this very reason, namely, to die for the world." He says "No!" to "save me," just mentioned, and "Yes!" to His purpose. "I've come" denotes Jesus' willing obedience. (Buls)

Kretzmann: Every Christian may say a similar prayer when the hour of tribulation comes upon him; only he must never set his own will above the will of his heavenly Father. . . Jesus corrects His prayer by asking that the work for which He came into the world continue. (Buls)

Verse 27 reveals two things: Jesus' intense agony and His willing obedience, no matter what the cost. (Buls)

Jesus' condition (the verb is perfect tense) is one of turmoil. Interpretation of the question in that verse is controverted. It could be a hypothetical/rhetorical question, or it could be an actual prayer Jesus immediately repudiates. Either way, his emphatic declaration is that he do the Father's will. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

Jesus had to come to Jerusalem to die. As true man, He was troubled by what He faced. The triumphant procession did not change the reality He knew was coming. He already felt the burden we associate with Gethsemane. He opened His soul for us to look in. Jesus was not a robot, heading for the scrap heap without feeling. As true God, He did not simply switch off all sorrow and suffering. His sufferings would be intense beyond measure because of our sin. (PBC)

this hour. Jesus faced the prospect of becoming sin (or a sin offering) for sinful people (2Co 5:21). He considered praying for God to save him from this death, but refused to pray it, because the very reason he had come was to die. (CSB)

Still the God-man never wavered from His assigned path. He did not cry out in human frailty for the Father to save Him from His ordeal. He had come from heaven for this very purpose, prepared for this time. He was there to bring glory to God. (PBC)

The thought of the coming ordeal, in a way, filled the soul of Christ with dread, He was deeply moved and agitated at the prospect. He felt something of the dread and fear of death. For Jesus was true man, whose flesh and blood shrank from the idea of death. Death is a judgment of God upon sins and sinners. To die in the stead of all men, as their substitute, and thus as the greatest sinner of all times, was a thought which filled the soul of Jesus with dread. He hardly knows what to say in this emergency. As though seeking counsel from His disciples, He asks: Shall I say, Father, deliver Me out of this hour? Should He plead to be saved the ordeal which His human nature dreaded? Every Christian may say a similar prayer when the hour of tribulation comes upon him; only he must never set his own will above the will of his heavenly Father. But even the thought of becoming unfaithful to His Father's trust Jesus repudiates, since it is for this reason that He came into this hour. It is the goal and culmination of His life's work. He cannot disappoint His Father at this time. Without His death His life would be fruitless. (Kretzmann)

12:28-33 The glory spoken of by Jesus and the Father is the cross, not outward splendor in the political, social realm. In being lifted up in death, God is present and seen. What appears as Satan's victory is actually his downfall. Certainly, Jesus is glorified in his resurrection and ascension as essential events in the work of salvation. But here the cross is the particular place where God is revealed for us, where God draws us to himself. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

12:28 *Father, glorify your name!* His prayer was not for deliverance but for the Father to be glorified. The voice from heaven gave the answer. (CSB)

The Father had already glorified Christ through His incarnation and earthly ministry (esp miracles and signs); now He was about to glorify Him again through His death and resurrection. (TLSB)

Note the word "glorify" for the second time. First, verse 27, in agony. Here in determination. The name of God is His revelation of Himself through Jesus. Jesus asks that revelation to be clothed in splendor by His suffering and dying. The Father had glorified His name, His revelation, by Jesus' incarnation, His life, miracles, baptism, preaching and transfiguration. (Buls)

The first "I have glorified" denotes approval, and second "will glorify" offers comfort and promise to Jesus. Commentators point out that this is the third word of the Father publicly about Jesus. The first was at His baptism, the second at His transfiguration. On this read John 17:4.5. Jesus is very God of very God, incarnate. The Father addresses Jesus as both human and divine. (Buls)

a voice came from heaven – The Father answered Jesus' prayer aloud from heaven. His name had been and would be glorified. By sending His Son in the flesh and through His Son's miraculous signs, the Father received glory (1:14). In the events to come, Christ's work of salvation – His death, resurrection and ascension – would most assuredly glorify God's name further. (PBC)

12:29 *thundered* – God's voice was audible to all, but not everyone identified it or understood it (cf. Ex 19:16,19). (TLSB)

It is clear that the crowd standing there heard something but did not understand. There were two opinions indicating that they discussed it. (Buls)

The ignorant Jews had heard the sound, but had not understood the words. And so they expressed their opinion, some thinking that there had been a clap of .thunder, others, that an angel had spoken with Jesus. (Kretzmann)

12:30 *voicc came for your sake* – The crowd needed to hear the voice as a sign that a truly cosmic even was being set in motion, the confrontation God had predicted in Eden (Genesis 3:15). (PBC)

Hendriksen thinks this means "Not exclusively for my sake has this voice occurred, but also for your sake." That may be, for the Father's voice surely strengthened Jesus. In any case it shows Jesus' great love for His disciples. Jesus assures them that the Father has answered His prayer (cf. 11 :42) and that He (Jesus) is about to do His great vicarious work. Jesus' entire thinking and doing is devoted to saving mankind. (Buls)

He is saying this was said so that they might have this additional evidence and He is the Son of God. (CB)

12:31 *of this world*. The cross was God's judgment on the world. (CSB)

The judgment of this world would be based on the outcome. This judgment is an ongoing process, as people either in faith accept or in unbelief reject Jesus as their Savior. (PBC)

Jesus Himself will be judged a criminal shortly, but here He speaks of the condemnation of Satan and the work of the Holy Spirit (cf 16:8-10). (TLSB)

the ruler of this world. Satan (cf. 16:11). The cross would seem to be his triumph; in fact, it was his defeat. Out of it would flow the greatest good ever to come to the world. (CSB)

A compound sentence. Each member introduced by "now," denoting what will happen presently. Only in this Gospel is Satan called "the ruler of this world." Compare 14:30 and 16:11. In all three cases, Satan is doomed. By causing man to fall into sin, Satan usurped authority over man. But Satan, who rules this world of men, is about to be thrown out. That is the judgment, the moment of crisis, of and for this world. Satan is conquered. Compare Luke 10:18 and Hebrews 2:14. (Buls)

Death is Satan's most fearsome weapon. By dying, Jesus conquered Satan and death. Jesus is speaking about His own death. Read Ephesians 2:1-10. Satan is still hard at work. The Gospel is our only hope. (Buls)

Christ's death on the cross may have appeared to be Satan's triumph, but in fact it spelled his overthrow. (TLSB)

Satan would be driven out as the Seed of the woman emerged as the risen victor. Jesus would break the devil's power over us. (PBC)

The efforts of Satan and wicked men to procure the death of Christ were overruled for the promotion of His glory, the salvation of His people, and the ruin of all who continued to oppose Him. (CB)

12:32 *And I*. Jesus emphasizes what He will experience and do. (TLSB)

lifted up. The cross was the supreme exaltation of Jesus (see notes on v. 41; 13:31). (CSB)

Only in John's Gospel (3:14; 8:28; 12:32,34) is "lifted up" used of Jesus' crucifixion. "Draw" is used of dragging dead weight, e.g. beaching ships or dragging a net of fish to the shore. Jesus used it again and again in John 6 of the Father "dragging" (drawing) people to Jesus. They cannot do it by their own powers. (Compare John 6:44). There the word was used of conversion but here Jesus is using "dragging" of redemption. We think that Lenski errs here when he says: (Buls)

This is the drawing exerted by grace through the means of grace (Word and Sacrament), alike in effectiveness and seriousness for all men, not in any way limited on God's part. . . Jesus is speaking of this universal and unlimited grace only in so far as it succeeds in actually drawing men from the world to himself. (Buls)

all people. Christ will draw people to himself without regard for nationality, ethnic affiliation or status. It is significant that Greek Gentiles were present on this occasion (v. 20). (CSB)

Not that everyone in the world would enter heaven, but Christ would make atonement for everyone's sins and draw people out of every nation to form His Church. (TLSB)

No! Jesus is not speaking of a potentiality, but an actuality. Jesus says: "I will draw all men to myself." This is the universal atonement, not the possibility of conversion. Lenski has real problems not only here but also with John 1:9; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Romans 5:12-21 and other passages. Look at John 12:33. Was the death of Christ for all men a mere potentiality or an actuality? It would be dangerous to say that Christ died for all only potentially. No. He died for all actually. Why then are not all saved? Because many reject what Christ and His cross did for all. Verse 32 must be taken literally without any kind of exegetical adornment. (Buls)

Bengel: 'Draw all men,' even the Gentiles. Satan shall not be able to retain them. He shall give way. Here the answer is given to the request made at verse 21. I WILL DRAW from earth, upwards. By this word a power is indicated in opposition to the prince of the world, who shall no longer detain his captives. (Buls)

Bengel rightly understood verse 32 as universal. Satan was not conquered potentially, but actually. Christ did not die for some men potentially, but for all actually. As Bengel says, here was Jesus' answer to the request of the Greeks. If the Greeks did not hear what Jesus said, Philip and Andrew likely told them what He said. (Buls)

All people have to enter judgment through Jesus. They cannot avoid the significance of the cross. (PBC)

12:33 This is plainly a comment by the Evangelist John. In indirect language, spoken for the benefit of the Greeks, Jesus is speaking of His crucifixion. When Jesus first announced His coming death to the disciples, they were shocked. Jesus likely uses "the kind of" here to soften the idea so they could get used to it. But He spoke in unmistakable terms. (Buls)

12:34 *the Law.* Here seems to mean OT Scripture in general (see note on 10:34), the reference being to passages such as Ps 89:36; 110:4; Isa 9:7; Da 7:14. (CSB)

Scriptural texts prophesying the Messiah's eternal kingdom (e.g., 2Sm 7:13; Ps 89:35–37; Dn 7:13–14). (TLSB)

how can you say – They searched for understanding. They believed from Scripture that the Christ would be eternal (Psalm 110:4; Isaiah 9:6, 7; Ezekiel 37:25; Daniel 7:13, 14). Sadly, for many that meant the Christ would set up an eternal kingdom on earth. It definitely did not make sense to them that the Christ would die. (PBC)

Son of Man. The only place in the Gospels where anyone other than Jesus used the expression, and even here Jesus is being quoted. (CSB)

be lifted up – Crowd evidently understood this as reference to Jesus' execution. (TLSB)

who is this Son of Man – People seem confused about the title's meaning, despite Jesus' emphasis on Himself in v. 32. The question implied, however, that at least some considered it a reference to the Messiah. (TLSB)

12:35–36 *the light*. Light is closely identified with Jesus, as seen from the call to believe in the light. (CSB)

Jesus did not try to explain away their doubts; He just told them to stay with Him while they still could. He called for them to trust in Him. Those people didn't need all their questions answered just then. They needed only to listen and believe. By walking in the light of Jesus, they would be enlightened. They would become light bearers too, shining Christ's light in their lives. (PBC)

While men have opportunities to obtain spiritual knowledge they should diligently improve them, lest their opportunities cease, and they be left to ignorance, darkness, and woe. (CB)

lest darkness overtake you – Believing in Jesus is a matter of utmost urgency. (TLSB)

12:27–36a Christ faces the moment of His glory, confirmed by His Father's voice from heaven: the hour when He would be lifted up on the cross so that He could draw all people to Himself. Now is the day of salvation (2Co 6:2); people ignore it at their great peril. Thanks be to God, Christ remains committed to His mission to save the world in spite of its unbelief. • Father, glorify Your Son and draw us to Him today. Amen. (TLSB)

The Unbelief of the People

When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. 37 Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, 38 so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” 39 Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, 40 “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.” 41 Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. 42 Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

12:36b *he departed* – From Jerusalem or perhaps from the crowd. (TLSB)

12:37 *they still would not believe.* God's ancient people should have responded when God sent his Messiah. They should have seen the significance of the signs he did. (CSB)

The faith of many on Palm Sunday was fickle. Although Jesus had done His miraculous signs in their presence, including the raising of Lazarus, they continued not to believe in Jesus. (PBC)

12:38 *Isaiah might be fulfilled* – Anticipating these days, the prophet Isaiah had asked, “Who has believed our message?” (53:1). Even though the Pharisees feared Jesus' popularity, in reality the people were rejecting Jesus' teaching. (PBC)

As Isaiah foretold, the people believed neither the message nor Jesus' signs (cf. 14:10-11). (TLSB)

12:39-40 As in the days of Isaiah, God's judgment locked people in their unbelief. They would not believe, so they are condemned to become those who could not believe. (TLSB)

12:39 *could not believe.* † They purposely rejected God and chose evil, and v. 40 explains that God in turn brought on them a judicial blinding of eyes and hardening of hearts. Yet many Jewish leaders did believe in Jesus as the Messiah (v. 42). (CSB)

Many of these people, especially the Jewish leaders, had become hardened in their hearts against Jesus. They didn't acknowledge the arm of God at work in His miracles. Finally, as He once did with Pharaoh at the time of Israel's exodus from Egypt, God blinded the eyes of those who refused to see and closed the hearts of those who had locked Jesus out. (PBC)

It is said of Joseph's brothers that they could not speak peaceably to him (Genesis 37:4); and Christ said to the Jews, “How can you believe, who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only?” (John 5:44) The two things were incompatible. They must cease from the one in order to do the other. So here; as they continue to love and cherish their sins, they could not, continuing this course, embrace the Messiah. The two things could not coexist. This was the reason why they should have renounced the one, and performed the other. But they would not do it. (CB)

12:40 These words from Isa 6:10 are quoted by Jesus (Mt 13:14–15; Mk 4:12; Lk 8:10) and by Paul (Ac 28:26–27). (CSB)

Referring to what was heard. (TLSB)

God has blinded their eyes by presenting to them truths which they would reject, their rejection bringing them into greater darkness. In a similar sense it is said, that Jesus Christ came into the world to set members of families at variance, by leading some to trust in Him, while others on this account opposed them and sought their death. (Matthew 10:21, 35, 36) (CB)

12:41 *saw his glory.* Isaiah spoke primarily of the glory of God (Isa 6:3). John spoke of the glory of Jesus and made no basic distinction between the two, attesting Jesus' oneness with God. The thought of glory here is complex. There is the idea of majesty, and there is also the idea (which meant so much to John) that Jesus' death on the cross and his subsequent resurrection and exaltation show his real glory. Isaiah foresaw the rejection of Christ, as the passages quoted (Isa 53:1; 6:10) show. He spoke of the Messiah both in the words about blind eyes and hard hearts, on the one hand, and about healing, on the other. This is the cross and this is glory, for the cross and

resurrection and exaltation portray both suffering and healing, rejection and triumph, humiliation and glory. (CSB)

Either directly in a vision or through the prophetic words God gave him. *His glory*. Isaiah either saw the preincarnate Christ or discerned what the Christ would do as the Suffering Servant. (TLSB)

You have heard the familiar verses. Perhaps you have learned them by heart: “He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed” (Is 53:5). “A bruised reed He will not break” (42:3). He “was numbered with the transgressors; yet He bore the sin of many” (53:12). You have sung the familiar hymns: “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded” (LSB 449), “Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted” (LSB 451), and “A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth” (LSB 438). Some of the more familiar Scripture passages are part of the songs of the Suffering Servant. For centuries, hymn writers have mined the rich imagery of the Servant Songs to create hymns of lasting comfort. (TLSB p. 1178)

The Holy Spirit inspired Isaiah to record four separate songs of the Suffering Servant (42:1–9; 49:1–13; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12). With remarkable clarity, 700 years before the Servant was born, Isaiah vividly portrayed His life from manger to grave to resurrection. He wrote how the Servant, born of a virgin, would atone for the sins of the world with His own suffering and death. No other human could fulfill the mission of the Servant. (TLSB p. 1178)

The Servant Is a Humble King

In the Old Testament, the king of Israel, the temple, and the land bear rich theological imagery. We hear of God accomplishing the salvation of His people through His king, dwelling with His people in His temple, and restoring His people to the land promised long ago. Isaiah further defined God’s kingly role as that of a Servant. The Messiah, a royal descendant of King David, would be a King radically different from all previous kings. True, this King would bring forth justice to the Gentiles, even to all the earth (42:1, 4), but He would come quietly and humbly (53:2). This King would come not to be served by His subjects, but to serve them. He would offer His life for all people. (TLSB p. 1178)

In the Servant Songs, God provided His prophet Isaiah a glimpse of the future, far beyond the impending judgment of Jerusalem and exile in Babylon. Isaiah wrote about the day when God Himself would dwell in human flesh with His people to serve them and all nations. For example, in ch 49, the Servant Himself speaks of His commission to bring salvation to Israel and to be a light to the Gentiles. He would take the sins of the world—past, present, and future—upon Himself and offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice to make satisfaction for that sin. (TLSB p. 1178)

A King like No Other

This King would not draw attention to Himself (42:2). Subjected to great humiliation (52:14), His appearance would startle and amaze other kings (52:15). Despised and rejected by people, He would be a man of sorrows, a man not highly esteemed (53:3). When accused, this innocent King would not defend Himself but would stand silent (53:7). The King would “bring forth justice to the nations” (42:1) in what would appear to be a gross miscarriage of justice, since the guilty would be released and the innocent condemned to die (53:8). (TLSB p. 1178)

Scorned by His own people, the Suffering Servant would be worshiped by princes. Despised by the common man, kings would arise to see Him (49:7). This King would be smitten, stricken, and

spat upon (53:4). He would be bruised, berated, and beaten (53:5). He would turn His cheek to allow His beard to be pulled and plucked (50:6). Although innocent of violence and deceit, He would be killed with criminals and buried with the wicked and the rich (53:9). Who is like this Servant King? (TLSB p. 1178)

Set Apart by the Father

Is 42:1 records the Father's introduction of this Suffering Servant and His work: "Behold My servant, whom I uphold, My chosen, in whom My soul delights; I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations." This Servant is the Father's singular chosen Servant. The Father unhesitatingly acknowledges Him. He is the One elected by the Father for this unique position of honor. He is the One in whom the Father greatly delights. Knowing the difficulty of the mission He has assigned to this Servant King, the Father confers His Spirit on Him to equip Him for His peculiar work. (TLSB p. 1178)

Centuries after Isaiah completed his prophetic work, when John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River, the Father's voice boomed from heaven with reference to the Servant Song, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Mt 3:17; cf Is 42:1). The Spirit descended from the heavens in the form of a dove and came to rest upon the Son (cf Is 42:1). Later (Lk 4:18), the Suffering Servant began His public ministry by reading the words of Is 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me." Then He proclaimed, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:21). Later, when the Servant turned to Jerusalem and His bloody mission on the cross, the Father again affirmed His pleasure with His Son and His work by saying, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Mt 17:5). (TLSB p. 1178)

The Servant Suffers for You

"But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed" (Is 53:5). With these poetic words, Isaiah drives the prophecy home. He explains why it was necessary for the Servant King to suffer. The almighty God took on human flesh in order that He might be humiliated, tortured, and killed to take away your sins! He was wounded—for you. He was crucified to bring about peace with God—for you. Through His work as the Suffering Servant, He brings healing—for you. Who is like this Servant King? Who is like this God? (TLSB p. 1178)

Tell me, ye who hear Him groaning,
Was there ever grief like His?
Friends through fear His cause disowning,
Foes insulting His distress;
Many hands were raised to wound Him,
None would intervene to save;
But the deepest stroke that pierced Him
Was the stroke that justice gave. (*LSB* 451:2)

There is no other God who loves and forgives like your God (Mi 7:18). He is the Suffering Servant King who died for you, that you might live eternally like a king with Him. (TLSB p. 1178)

12:42 *many even of the authorities believed on him* – Though they remained secret believers for fear of excommunication (see note on 9:22). (CSB)

E.g., Nicodemus (3:1-21) and Joseph of Arimathea (19:38). (TLSB)

fear of the Pharisees – Pharisees controlled Jewish synagogues. Few dared to oppose them, for fear of being ostracized. (TLSB)

They hid their real views for fear of being put out of the synagogue. They could not face the humiliation of that, valuing their reputation among the people more than their need to give glory to God. They still loved glory that comes from men more than the glory that comes from God in Christ. We should not be surprised at this cowardice in faith. Our own lives display it today. How often do we Christians fail to confess our faith because we fear the reaction of those around us? (PBC)

12:36b–43 Some Jews reject Jesus and, under God’s judgment, are hardened in unbelief; others believe in Him but refuse to confess Him openly for fear of being removed from the synagogue community. The desire to be accepted by others can stand in the way of a Christian’s bold confession of Christ today. Yet, take heart. God has revealed His saving presence (His glory) in the person of His Son, that we may glorify Him before all people. • Lord, may I “tell of [Your] salvation from day to day” (Ps 96:2). Amen. (TLSB)

Jesus Came to Save the World

44 And Jesus cried out and said, “Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. 45 And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. 46 I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. 47 If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. 48 The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. 49 For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment— what to say and what to speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.”

12:44 *cried out.* The words are given special emphasis by being spoken in a loud voice. (CSB)

whoever believes in me. John ends his story of the public ministry of Jesus with an appeal for belief. He does not say when Jesus spoke these words (they may have been uttered earlier), but they are a fitting close to this part of his account. (CSB)

who sent me. Jesus’ mission, as well as the inseparability of the Father and the Son, is stressed throughout this Gospel. (CSB)

12:46 *I have come into the world.* Points to both Jesus’ preexistence and his mission. (CSB)

12:47 Christ came to save the world by making atonement for sin. Even on the Last Day, first and foremost He will be our Savior. (TLSB)

to judge. Not the purpose of Jesus’ coming, but judgment is the other side of salvation. It is not the purpose of the sun’s shining to cast shadows, but when the sun shines, shadows are inevitable. (CSB)

12:48 *word...judge him* – Christ offered life to His hearers, but their rejection of His message would condemn them. They had a chance to embrace life, but they freely chose death instead. (TLSB)

12:49 *the Father ... commanded me what to say.* Jesus' hearers have a great responsibility. His "word" (v. 48) is that which the Father commanded him to say. To reject it, therefore, is to reject God. (CSB)

Throughout His ministry, Christ simply did and spoke what His Father told Him to do and speak. (TLSB)

12:50 *eternal life.* The message entrusted to Jesus by His Father has one goal: to bring eternal life to all who believe it. (TLSB)

12:44–50 As Jesus concludes His public ministry, He reminds His hearers that He has come to save the world. Rejection of Christ and His Word brings judgment. Believers, however, do not see in Jesus an angry judge but a loving Savior who has our salvation ever on His heart. • Gracious Savior, remove from my heart all unbelief and doubt. Amen. (TLSB)