

Introduction: Pg. ____

Proportionate Relationship??

For those of you who are new to Christianity, it's so essential to understand why Jesus died and why that matters for us. Everything hinges/pivots on the cross of Jesus.

There is a strange irony when it comes to understanding the story of Jesus... The clearer we see the death of Christ, the more we understand our lives. The better grasp his death, the more effectively we will live. The greater our comprehension of his death, the greater the clarity for how we should live our lives.

As his death becomes clearer, our devotion will become greater.

"Death & Devotion" **John 11:45-12:19**

The Point: Respond to the death of Jesus with extravagant devotion.

As the Gospel of John presses forward, the cross of Christ looms larger and larger. The cross is a symbol of death, representing the most despicable and shameful form of execution in the Roman Empire, and yet the cross is *the* primary symbol of Christianity.

We can still see crosses everywhere in our culture: necklaces, tattoos, ornamental decorations, but how many people really know what the cross is all about and how many embrace what the cross is all about? Many of us are trying to grow in our ability to help others understand who Jesus is, what he did, and why it matters for us, and this is a great way to start a meaningful conversation by simply asking: What does that cross mean to you?

I. Understand why Jesus was crucified.

Let me give you two sweeping factors that led to the death of Jesus. #1

People were jealous

- Check out Verses 45-48 with me.
- The Pharisees were the religious leaders of the Jews who were esteemed by the people. The council they gathered was known as "the Sanhedrin," which functioned as the supreme court of the Jewish nation comprised of 71 members, including the high priest.
 - They were threatened by Jesus' because they found themselves on the wrong end of the popularity equation. Jesus was rising in the eyes of the people, which meant their importance took a major hit.
 - We'll see this again when Jesus entered Jerusalem and massive crowds rushed to greet him. The Pharisees say (in 12:19): "You see that you are gaining nothing. LOOK! The world has gone after him."
 - Their greatest fear was that Jesus would continue to draw such a following that it would lead to an uprising of the people and Rome would strip away their "internal autonomy and religious freedom" of temple worship.

- Why was all of this discussion going on? Because Jesus had just performed the unimaginably unthinkable miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead.
- If you're keeping score, that does NOT HAPPEN! People don't rise from the dead, and people don't make other people rise from the dead, unless of course that person is GOD.
- This is why they wanted to annihilate him.
- Did you catch the twisted irony in their words: "If we let him go on like this..." "If we let JESUS go on like *THIS*..." I mean was there not anyone in the room... "could you define: 'let him go on like this.' Do you mean how he causes blind people to see? Or are you referring to how the hungry are fed? Or maybe our issue you is with the times he put strength and vitality into legs that never walked? Or are you referring to how we've never heard anyone speak with such authority couple with simultaneous mercy.?' Or the fact that he raises people from the dead? Is that what you mean by "*THIS*"? Do we really have a problem with him going on *like THIS*?

T: Oh they did have a problem with it. Jesus was crucified because the people were jealous, but there's more going on here... Jesus was also crucified, and primarily so because,

Jesus was gracious.

- Look in verses 49-53: Did you hear the ruthless words of the high priest? The most expedient solution, what is best for everyone is that "one man [Jesus] should die *for the people*, [than the whole nation die]"
- The high priest says: His life for our lives. His death rather than our death. Though he was simply referring to their physical life, God spoke a deeper message through Caiaphas than he could have dreamed.
- The heart of the gospel tells us that Jesus voluntarily and graciously lived the life we should have lived (perfectly according to God's design; anybody failed at that?) and he died the death that we should have died, so that we might have a full life now and a forever life with God beyond this life.
- **The gospel in one verse: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2:24)**
- Do you see the depth of Christ's love? The Jewish leaders were going to put him to death out of a fear of losing their power. Jesus willing gave up his power so that he might save people just like them, and just like you, and just like me.
- And this was not for just a few people. It is for "all the children of God scattered abroad." (52) Let me translate, any person, in any place on the planet, who hears about this gift that God offers the world through Jesus, and believes in him, they experience life! (John 3:16; John 5:24; John 6:51; John 8:12; John 10:16)
- That includes me. That includes you. Jesus brings unity out of diversity. Just look around.
- One of the greatest arguments for the veracity of Christianity is how it unifies people across the spectrum of diversity.

So let me ask you: How do you respond to the death of Christ? **What does the cross mean to you?**

- That's nice. What a great example.
- Is it a mere acknowledge, a mere nod of the head, or does the extravagant love of Christ absolutely pull you in?

T: Those who truly understand why Jesus died and embrace his gift, they will...

II. Respond to the death of Jesus with extravagant devotion.

Read 12:1-8. Three characters come to the center in this dinner celebration: Mary, the sister of a man named Lazarus who Jesus just raised from the dead, Judas, the disciple of Jesus who was going to betray him, and Jesus himself.

- While Jesus was reclined at the dinner table, Mary took a Roman pound (11.5oz) of a precious oil that was worth 300 Denarii. You say 300 of anything could be a lot, but is it that big of a deal? Ummm. Yeah, that would have been a year's worth of wages.
- There is no doubt when Mary broke open this oil, and began to anoint the feet of Jesus, and the amazing aroma filled the room, that her actions would be perceived as foolish and reckless by many in the room. She would have been seen as being excessive. That's what it means to be extravagant. TO be carried away. To lack restraint. Probably like the owners of the 2 Lamborghinis and Ferrari we saw yesterday on Boylston St.. Some people would call that excessive or extravagant, and that is certainly the charge that should have been leveled at Mary in these moments.
- She took a year's worth of wages and used it all in a matter of seconds!

And this is where we see the CONTRAST.

- Judas speaks up and says: "Hey, this could have been used for the poor..." Perhaps this is what others were thinking, but Judas said it, not because he cared for the poor but because he cared for himself. John tells us that he used to help himself to the moneybag. Even Jesus had shady people on his team.
- But while Judas focused on himself and his net worth, Mary was focused on the worth of Christ.
- R.C. Sproul says: "Anyone who has ever been in love at some point has made an extravagant gift for the one that he or she loved, and the only justification for it was the love that he or she felt. If we love Christ, it is appropriate to love Him extravagantly, for He is worthy of extravagant love." (R. C. Sproul)

What her act of extravagant devotion tell us?

1. Extravagant devotion begins by seeing the incalculable worth of Christ.

- Let's not forget that Mary is responding to Jesus as the one who has power over death. Jesus had just raised her brother from the dead. Her heart was absolutely filled with gratitude and love because she had not simply witnessed his powerful love, she experienced his powerful love. You follow me? It was intensely/deeply personal!
- It's the difference between: Oh yeah, I saw him drop what he was doing to dart out in front of that car and save that kid's life. And he dropped what he was doing to dart out in front of that car to save MY kid's life.
 - One amazes you. The other makes you weep and quake - for joy.
 - One makes you happy. The other gives you unending joy.
- Do you realize, like Mary that Death is Defeated? Death absolutely crumbles under the glory of Christ. We get it on that?! What?! Easter is not one day; it's everyday.
- She clearly saw the worth of Jesus, and then she responded to the worth of Jesus. This is what worship is. Worship is our response to what we value the most, which tells us that extravagant devotion begins by seeing the incalculable worth of Christ, but
- She valued Christ more than her most precious possessions. What about us?
- Is Jesus more valuable than any earthly relationship? Is he more valuable than our greatest ambitions? Our greatest pursuits of pleasure?
- "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36-37).
- Everyone in the room knew that Jesus was more precious to her than any other person and any other possession.

2. Extravagant devotion ends with expressing our love for Christ.

- The natural product of true faith in Christ is affection for Christ that cannot be hidden. Extravagant devotion is always revealed, never concealed.
- When we sing, does your heart rejoice? When you consider what Christ has done, are you filled with a sense of deep gratitude? When was the last time the gospel moved you to tears?
- Would someone ever charge you with extravagant devotion to Christ?
- And let me encourage you hear: some of you are thinking, does this mean I gotta go sell my cah. Sell my house... give the proceeds to those in need. There are times for radical, extravagant sacrifice, BUT most of the time our extravagant devotion will be expressed in the daily grind of ordinary life.
 - Being patient with a co-worker that's driving you crazy
 - Giving over your anxieties to Jesus and trusting him with the results of your day
 - Opening up your Bible, hearing from him, and receiving life
 - Picking up some trash in Medford Square with a few other neighbors
 - Sending some encouragement to a person who is struggling. Just spending some time.
- All of that adds up to an extravagantly devoted life.

The very next day, verse 12 of chapter 12 tells us, "the large crowd..."

TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

- For Passover, the population in Jerusalem would swell to 25k to estimates ranging between 250k and 2.5M.
- As Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem, the people rushed to him and cried out: "Hossana... (Lord, save us)..."
 - They saw as the one who could be the Messiah and deliver them from the hand of the Romans.
 - Palm branches were symbols of victory and kingship.
- They hailed Christ as the coming King. This scene is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies like Zechariah 9:9 which says, "**Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a cold, the foal of a donkey.**"
- It also fulfills the closing words to **Psalm 118:22-26a**
 - **The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.**

This is the Lord's doing;

it is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day that the Lord has made;

let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Save us {HOSANNA}, we pray, O Lord!

O Lord, we pray, give us success!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

So what do we learn about Jesus? What does it look like for Christ to be the King of our lives?

- He is the king, but he is the humble king. Jesus rejected the "warhorse as his mount (associated with violent resistance)" and instead rides in on an inglorious donkey. He comes in ways we do not expect, and his kingdom is an upside-down kingdom where humility equals greatness and victory is won through death.

- He is also the Powerful King
 - He is the cornerstone.. The rock that will never be moved...
 - King who inspires confidence. "FEAR NOT" (John 12:15)
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Conclusion:

- Those who belong to him, must reflect him. Humility in coming, humility in living, humility forever (rw)
- Those who belong to him, should reflect him. Power and Confidence to LIVE LIFE.
- This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.
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- How marvelous is Christ to you? Is he the king? Is he your king? Is he worthy of your extravagant devotion?

Call for a response...

Setup Jessey...

Conclude..