

We want to welcome all of you to Christ Fellowship today. I want to tell you, if you are a guest with us for the first time today. I want you to know you are not here by accident. It is not random that you are here, but God has brought you here for such a time in your life as this, because He wants to speak into your life. God always does that through His Word, and that is what we are committed to here. So, if you have a Bible with you today, I want to encourage you to open it to John, chapter twelve. If you don't have a Bible, don't worry. All of it will come up on the screen and you can follow along with us that way.

Just so you will know, we have been on this journey through the gospel of John for a year and a half. We started in John, chapter one, a year and a half ago, and we are not in John, chapter twelve. We kicked off our series last week that we entitled "Promises, Promises, Promises". That is what we are looking at from John, chapter twelve.

I want to begin by reading a parallel passage on this same event, Jesus riding into Jerusalem in John, chapter twelve. I want to read this from Luke. Listen to what happens here. The Bible says, *"And as he",* that is Jesus, *"approached Jerusalem".* So He's riding in on a donkey, *"and saw the city, he wept over it, and he said, "If you, even you had only known on this day what could bring you peace, but now it is hidden from your eyes.."* Stop right there and let me set this up by sharing this with you.

There are days in time, there are moments in time when you see something so amazing that you will never forget it. In fact, you can recall right where you were and what you were doing when you saw that event. You might feel blessed that you were alive on that day so that you could experience that moment in the past. For some of you, there was no other day and no other moment in time like the day, July 29, 1969, and the moment was 2:56 pm. Just eight days earlier, NASA had launched Apollo 11 on a trajectory for the moon. On board was three astronauts as they were on mission to not only land on the moon, but to walk on the moon.

Mind you, all previous missions by NASA had set the stage for this moment in time. In fact, in less than nine years, man had gone into space for the first time. Man had rendezvoused in space for the first time; man had walked in space for the first time; and man had circled the moon for the first time. All of that set the stage on July 20, 1969 for the first time for man to walk on the surface of the moon.

Folks, what I love is this: NASA not only made this moment possible, but NASA also made a promise to the entire human race and that promise was the promise that NASA made. NASA promised that they would they would carry this event live on TV from the moon. Folks, if you were alive on that day, and you saw that event, live, you saw something, didn't you? I mean, you experienced something amazing. Get it: If you

were alive on that day and you missed seeing that, you missed something. Folks, the excitement began earlier that day, and grew earlier that day with the successful landing of the lunar module on the surface of the moon. Now the stage was set for man to walk on the surface of the moon for the first time.

Neil Armstrong was poised. It was 10:50 that night, and Neil Armstrong was poised to make his descent from the lunar module down to the surface of the moon with cameras rolling. Folks, I'll never forget: I was twelve years old, and I was gathered around the television at my granddad's mobile home. Picture it: My brother was there; my dad was there; all of my uncles were there; all of my cousins were gathered around the TV, waiting to see this moment in time. I was twelve years old and I've got to tell you, my heart was just about to pound out of my chest.

Folks, check this out: One of my cousins was not in there. In fact, she was in a little bedroom back in this mobile home, glued to a little portable TV. Now mind you, in Rock Hill, where I grew up at that time, back in those days, there were only two major stations, and that was NBC and CBS. They were both carrying the moon live. The only other station in Rock Hill was a local station, Channel 18, and it carried night time soap operas; and my cousin Peggy was glued to the TV watching a soap opera. So, folks, my grand dad called out to her: "Peggy, get in here, or you are going to miss something." I'll never forget her response. She yelled back at my grandfather: "I could care less about the moon. All I want to watch is my soap opera."

Folks, I couldn't believe it. This was the biggest moment in human history, as far as human beings go. This was the time man was about to make the giant leap. This was the fulfillment of JFK's dream, and vision. NASA was fulfilling the promise to carry this moment in time live. But my cousin, Peggy, was so hypnotized by night time soap operas that it hid the moon from her eyes, and folks, she missed it! She missed it, and she missed something that she would never get to see live again in her lifetime. She missed it!

Now, let me turn a corner and bring all of that over to John, chapter twelve. Here is my proposition. God Almighty makes extraordinary promises to us in His Word. Without a provocation, the greatest promise of all that God makes to us is the promise of giving us eternal life. That means we get to experience the presence of God in this life and we get to experience the presence of God forever, even on the new earth that God will create. But folks, listen: Many people are so hypnotized by the soap operas in their life that they miss seeing the promise of eternal life going by them. They miss it. Nowhere do we see this any more clearly than in John, chapter twelve.

You may be saying: "Rick, what do you mean by the soap operas of my life? And how can I be sure that I don't miss the gift of eternal life?" We are going to find out as we go back to John, chapter twelve. I want to give you two thoughts. Let's all lean into this. This is one we've got to think through. I want to give you two thoughts. Here they are. Number one: God gives amazing promises. God makes some amazing promises. With that being said, let's pick it up in verse twelve. John 12:12. The Bible says: "*The next day*". Don't miss this because the next day was a day like no other day in human history. In fact, the next day that we are going to look at in a moment, made the day that man walked on the moon look like a yawn. The next day that we are going to look at, in John, chapter twelve, made the day that man walked on the moon look mundane. The day that man walked on the moon was a day in time. What happens in John, chapter twelve, was a day in eternity.

Look at verse twelve. John 12:12: "*The next day*". Now put your thinking caps on because the next day means something happened the day before, right? And what happened? We all know don't we? What happened: Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Get it: The day before, Lazarus was dead. In fact, he was so dead that his corpse had already begun to stink. Lazarus was so dead that his corpse was already decomposing and beginning to rot. They had to wrap it up in linens, like a mummy, to knock down the stench. But Jesus walked up to the cave where Lazarus was buried and Jesus gave a command to the corpse of Lazarus. Folks, when Jesus gave that command, the dead heart began to beat again. The dead lungs began to inhale and to exhale. Dead skin was rejuvenated and renewed. He came back to life, and folks, a dead man got up and walked out alive from the grave. I don't even have to tell you this: That electrified the crowd that saw it, to the point – look at verse seventeen. It says this: "*Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to spread the word.*"

Folks, picture it. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead in this little town called Bethany. But this little town, Bethany, butted right up against the major city of Jerusalem. So, check this out: The crowd over in Bethany that saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead, they go into the big city of Jerusalem and they begin to spread the word to this massive crowd of people in Jerusalem. In fact, listen to verse seventeen. John 12:17. "*The next day, the great crowd that had come for the festival there in Jerusalem, heard that Jesus was on his way.*" Folks, get the picture. The crowd in Bethany that saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead, they go into the major city of Jerusalem, and they tell what the Bible calls, a great crowd of people what happened. This great crowd was a crowd of people who had come for the festival.

You say, "What festival?" Well, it was Passover, the highest holy day in Israel. Folks, Jewish people from all over the world would surge into the city of Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. In fact, one census taken at that time revealed that two point seven million people had come to the city of Jerusalem. That is why they are called the great crowd. So watch what happens, with that in mind: Verse 12: *"The next day, the great crowd in Jerusalem that had come for the festival, for Passover, heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem."* So they know that He is coming. Watch what they do: Verse 13: *"So they took palm branches and went out to meet him."* So, as Jesus is coming in, they go out to meet Him with palm branches, and they are shouting, *"Hosanna!" "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." "Blessed is the King of Israel."* Folks, this was an electric moment. Check this out: You had the crowd that saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead going ahead of Him. Then you have this massive crowd of millions of people in Jerusalem, surging out of Jerusalem to meet that crowd coming in. So, these two crowds begin surging together like two great rivers of people; and the air is electric, as Jesus comes riding in.

You say, "Why was there so much excitement? Why did all of these people come out to meet Jesus? Well, there are two reasons, right? The first reason is, everybody either saw Him raise Lazarus, or heard that He had raised Lazarus from the dead. Not only that, there was excitement because of the day, and the day was April the 6th, 32 AD. You say, "What day was that?" That was the very day that God, five hundred years before Jesus ever rode in, God promised in the Book of Daniel that when the Messiah came, He would officially declare Himself as King, to the people of Jerusalem on April 6, 32 AD. God reached out into the future and grabbed a precise day.

You recall that what God did in Daniel 9, written 500 years before, God told the people back then: He said if you start on March 14, 445 BC, that is the starting point, and you go 483 years, into the future; 173,880 days, you will come to the exact day that the Messiah will come. Folks, if you start on March 14, 445 BC, and go 483 Jewish years, 173,880 days, you will come to the exact day: April 6, 32 AD. You say, "What day was that?" That was the exact day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem, exactly like God said He would. You see, the people knew it was that day.

Not only did the people know it was that day, Jesus knew it was that day. So, listen to what He said. "As He approached Jerusalem and saw the city, He wept over it, and said: *"If you, even you, had only known on this day."* What day? The 173,880th day of Daniel. *"If you had known on this day, what would bring you peace."* God promised to bring you peace. In fact, God said, all the way back five hundred years before, "This is the day that the Messiah will come, and when the Messiah comes, He is coming to bring you

peace. You say, "What kind of peace?" Jesus came to give us the peace of eternal life. He came to give you the peace of knowing, not hoping, but knowing, that you have eternal life. L John 5:13 says "*These things are written that you might know that you have eternal life.*" That is what God wants to give you. That peace. Folks, make no mistake about it; before God could give us the peace of eternal life, He first had to save us from eternal death. Because, get this: You and I, everyone in here, we are all sinners. You don't become a sinner; you are born into sin. Your sins and my sins can separate us from God in this life, and your sins will separate you from God in eternity, forever. So, here is what we need to know. Jesus came to save us from our sins. So here was this incredible day, just moments in time that the Messiah was riding in. God Almighty in the flesh was coming by to bring people the peace of everlasting life. Here is what we need to know. Jesus said the Son of Man came to seek and to save those who are lost. That is what He came for. We can miss the promises of God. Listen to verse 13. John 12:13. "*They took palm branches and went out to meet Him, shouting "Hosanna!" "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the King of Israel."*" The word "Hosanna" there is actually a Hebrew word. Hosanna is not translated. That is the Hebrew word. Hosanna literally means "save now". That is what they were yelling. We might be inclined to think that this crowd was saying, "Save us now from our sins", but they weren't. They weren't asking Jesus to save them from their sins. They were asking Him to save them from Rome.

Put your history caps on for a moment. At this time in Israeli history, Israel was an occupied territory. By that I mean, Israel was occupied militarily, and Israel was occupied politically by the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire not only controlled Israel, the government of Israel, but they extracted exorbitant taxes from the people. This was a taxation that the people of Israel hated. What Israel wanted was a leader that could stop Rome from taxing them. And folks, there is no doubt that the Israeli people were looking to Jesus, with His messianic credentials, with His miraculous powers, to be the one to overthrow the Roman Empire and get them out from under these taxes.

Now, stay with me. Keep your history caps on, because a hundred and fifty years before these people stood on this street and shouted Hosanna, a hundred and fifty years before, they stood on that same street and shouted the same word, Hosanna. You see, a hundred and fifty years before, the Assyrians had persecuted and overcome the Israeli people. Assyria, led by a tyrannical leader by the name of Antiochus Epiphenes IV persecuted the Jewish people; ran over the Jewish people.

In fact, historians tell us that he went into the Temple of God, took down his trousers, and urinated in the Temple of God. A Jewish man by the name of Simon Maccabeas led a revolt, led an insurrection against the Assyrians, and conquered Assyria; overthrew the Assyrians. Folks, after he conquered Assyria, Simon Maccabeas rode into Jerusalem on this same road that Jesus was coming in on. In fact, Simon Maccabeas got on the biggest horse he could find and rode in with his military entourage behind him. Simon Maddabeas victoriously rode into Jerusalem. The Jewish people went out with palm branches, and as he was coming in, they put the palm branches in his way, and they shouted *"Hosanna"*. *"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."*

Folks, there is little doubt that the Jewish people were looking at Jesus with his miraculous powers, and they were wanting Him to be a political messiah. They were wanting Him to be a silent Maccabeas type of savior. They were looking for Him to be the one who could overthrow Rome like Maccabeas overthrew Assyria, which is why when Jesus came riding in, they were saying "Save us now, from Rome." Folks, I don't have to tell you, Jesus did not come to save people from Rome. He did not come to save people from taxes. That is like the soap opera of the day, that has come and gone. Jesus came to save us from something far more eternal than that. He came to save us from eternal death. He came to give us the peace of everlasting life, the joy of everlasting life. Which is why when Jesus rode into Jerusalem, He did not ride in on a horse like a military conqueror. He rode in on the back of a donkey. Folks, could God have humbled Himself any more?

Listen to what the text says. "Jesus found a young donkey, and sat on it, as it is written". Zechariah 9:9, the good old prophet five hundred years before said, *"Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion. See, your King is coming, seated on a donkey's colt."* Folks, have no illusions: Jesus refused to be a political messiah. When Jesus refused to be a god, and country savior, when He refused to do that, the same crowd that was shouting "Hosanna!" "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord", that same crowd a few days later would shout, "Crucify Him". That same crowd that said, "Hosanna!", "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." When Jesus refused to be a political savior, the same crowd said to Pilate, "We will not have this man to reign over us." The same crowd that had shouted "Hosanna!" shouted to Pilate, "We have no king but Caesar!" That must have floored Pilate when the Jewish people said that. "We will not have this man reign over us. Crucify him."

You see folks, Here is what we need to know. Temporary issues can hide our eyes from God. They can block the view of God. Look at what Jesus said again. "As He approached

Jerusalem and saw the city, He wept over it and said, 'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace, but now it is hidden from your eyes.' Picture it: Jesus was the very presence of God. God was coming by. Jesus was called Emanuel. Any time you see that prefix el – if your name is Daniel, Rachel, Gabriel, Israel, you've got Elohem in your name. Emanuel means God is with us. Do you realize what was happening on this day, folks? God was coming by. God had shown up to these people, and was promising them the gift, not to be saved from taxes, but to be saved from eternal death, and to give them the gift of eternal life. There was no other moment like this moment in time. But, folks, everybody it seemed like, including the religious leaders of the day were so hypnotized by the soap opera, by the politics of the day, that they missed seeing God go by, and they missed the gift of eternal life.

So here is what we need to know. Temporary stuff can cause us to miss eternal promises. He said, "Even if you had known on this day what would bring you peace – God intended to bring peace, but now it was hidden from their eyes. Get it: Their own religious leaders had convinced the masses that they did not need a spiritual savior. They needed a political savior. The spiritual leaders of the day had convinced the masses that they did not need a spiritual savior. They needed a national savior. Boy, does that not sound familiar? Preachers today have abandoned telling people they needed Christ as Savior, and who go to all of these political programs and preach about national stuff, political stuff. If you had asked people of the day that Jesus rode in who are dead and now are dying an eternal death, if you had gone to them and said, "Wasn't that stuff big about the taxes?" They would say, "Are you sick? Are you out of your mind? That was nothing. That came and went. What God was offering and we weren't buying was because we were so mesmerized and so hypnotized by the politics of the day, we missed God over all of that." Are you kidding? Well, consequently, they did not want a Jesus who came to save them from eternal death. They did not want a Jesus who had come to love them. They were basically saying, "I don't want a Jesus who came to love me. I want a Jesus who can knock out the Roman Empire. Jesus wants to give me eternal life, but I'm concerned about my taxes in this life." So, as God went riding by, they were so hypnotized by the soap opera of the day, like my cousin, that they missed eternal life, as it went riding right past them..

Folks, let me bring all of that over to 2016, because what an image of what happens in our day. You see, listen: If you are here today and you have never received the gift of eternal life, if you have never embraced Christ as your Savior, you need to understand this. The Bible says in Revelation 3:20: I love this verse. Jesus says this to you. He says, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock.*" In other words, Jesus depicts Himself as

standing outside the door of your life, and He is knocking at the door of your heart, and He is saying to you, "I want to come in". To put it another way: The presence of God is standing outside the door of your heart, and maybe you can sense as I am talking that something is going on in your heart right now. It is ethereal and it is intangible, and that may be you sense it, that God is knocking at the door of your heart. He wants to come in and bring you His love, His mercy, His compassion, His peace, His kindness, His gentleness, His long suffering. He wants to give you all of that. It's like God is going by but you see some people so hypnotized by all of the soap operas of their life – money, stuff, jobs, careers, politics, you name it. They miss the gift of eternal life.

That may be you today. That may be what is happening, or has happened to you. Can I tell you something? Listen: That almost happened to me, literally. Literally, folks, literally! A night time soap opera literally almost kept me from missing God. Let me explain what I mean. Many of you have heard me tell my testimony about how I came to Christ. Let me just share it with you. When I was sixteen years old, almost seventeen, we lived in South Carolina. My Mom and Dad had been separated but they left the Carolinas and lived somewhere down in Florida for two weeks, trying to put their marriage back together. But when they went to Florida, they left my brother Mike and me at home to fend for ourselves.

Folks, I'll never forget it, because it was a Friday night, and my brother Mike was out on a date. I don't know what it was about him. I couldn't get a girl, to save my life. Thank God for Rhonda, who rescued me. It was a Friday night, and it was okay that he was out on a date. I was at home watching my favorite program, Beretta. Now, I'm watching Beretta and I am glued to this program. All of a sudden there was a knock on the door. I go to the door and it is two men, two laymen out in our neighborhood telling people about Christ. Let me tell you one thing about growing up in South Carolina. Your mother just drills manners into you, and so, I had manners drilled into me so when anybody knocks on the door, you invite them in. So, I said, "Come on in." So they sit down and they start telling me about Jesus. Folks, I don't turn Beretta off, because I could care less about Jesus at this moment. I cared about Beretta, so I'm watching Beretta and I'm being nice to them, and listening. Finally, I think these two guys figured it out, that I wasn't interested in what they had to say. So they got up and went to the door.

Folks, as I followed them to the door, it was a God thing because I had to leave Beretta. I go to the door, and they are outside the door now. One of the guys was a cop, and he said, "Rick, before we go, could I read you one verse of scripture? I said

"Sure". He read 1 Peter 2:24. It says *"Who his own self- talking about Jesus – bore our sins in his body on the cross, that we being dead to sin might live for righteousness."* He said, "Rick, do you know what that means?" I said, "I have no idea. I'm not a church going person." He said, "Rick, that means God took every sin that you will ever commit, and He took those sins off of you that should be punished, and put them on Christ on that cross, and God unleashed his wrath against Jesus for sin, so it wouldn't be unleashed on you. Folks, I had never heard that before. I remember standing there at the door and saying, "You mean He loved me enough to do that?" I didn't know it at the time, but I know it now; I was under conviction. God was knocking, and I wanted to say to these guys, "Come back in and tell me more." But before they left, they gave me this thing called a gospel tract, a piece of paper. On the front of it, it said, "God's simple plan of salvation." So I go back in and I turned Baretta off and I started reading this tract. I honestly couldn't figure it out. I just couldn't add things together. But on the back of this tract, somebody had rubber stamped the phone number of the church that these guys were from. I knew they were out from the church because they told me. So I went to the phone and started dialing the number of this church, hoing to get somebody. This was the days before pushbuttons. This was the days before redial. I was dialing, hoping, and about nine o'clock that night a lady picks up the phone. I said, "Maam, there were two men here and one was a cop. Would you ask them to come back?" She said, "Sure". Later that night they knock on the door again, and they say, "What's up?" I said, "Could you come in and tell me more about Jesus?"

Folks, I'll never forget the verse, Romans 10:13. It says, *"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* As a sixteen year old boy, almost seventeen, I knelt down there by the sofa. I remember pretty much what I said. I said, "Lord, I don't know much about you – and I didn't- but I know I'm a sinner, and I know that I need a Savior. I opened the door of my heart, and I gave my life to Christ, and He gave me eternal life. Folks, I want to tell you: There was no lightning, no thunder; I didn't even cry. But when I got up, I knew, based upon the authority of the Word of God that my life had been changed forever, and I had been given the gift of everlasting life. But listen: I almost missed it. I almost missed it because I was hypnotized by a TV program.

If you are here today without Christ, just like God had to get me away from that, if you are here today you are not here by accident. You are here because God brought you here today. God has brought you here to get your eyes off of all of the soap operas out there, so that you can focus on God as He goes by. As He is standing before you today, and Jesus is saying, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If you will open the door, I

will come in and I'll begin an everlasting relationship with you, because I will give you everlasting life. My prayer for you today is that you are going receive that gift and have that peace of knowing, not hoping, but knowing that you have eternal life.