

“Going After Jesus” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Palm Sunday April 13, 2025

- I. **John 12:19** – ¹⁹So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him.”
- II. **Are you a fan of anything?**
 - a. If I went around the sanctuary, each of you probably follows a sport, a personality, or an interest that varies depending on your background.
 - i. We may know all the details about a team or person we follow, or the history of an entertainer... or invest in memorabilia.
 - ii. I’m a Denver Broncos fan from when I was a little kid, going to my first game when I was seven... and I can tell you quite a bit about their history.
 - b. Other fans take things to a much higher level – for example I know one college football fan that would fly from Portland to their team’s home games every Saturday throughout the football season.
 - i. Still others spend every penny on going around the country to attend concerts for their favorite musician.
 - c. In some cases, a fan is a “fair weather fan”, or someone who only shows up when the weather is nice, or their team is winning... meaning they are not a truly committed fan.
 - i. We can also say there are “bandwagon fans” who see a winning team or popular musician and become a fan until the team starts losing, or the group’s popularity goes away.
 - ii. I read an article a couple of days ago that showed some fans are really just imposters.
 1. A Texas man had the winning bid for a Taylor Swift guitar at a charity auction... and promptly took a hammer to it in front of the crowd.
 - a. It was supposedly a joke, or lighthearted moment, but most people figure it was probably because of her political views.
 - d. The truth is, we really don’t know how invested or authentic a fan is... we can only look at their outward behavior and life.
 - i. When I see a guy at a Trailblazers game wearing a Clyde Drexler signed jersey, I assume that he’s probably a big fan...
 - ii. But who knows? He might have no idea who Clyde Drexler is and just bought the jersey on eBay under “how to look like an authentic fan”!
- III. **Jesus was a superstar as He entered Jerusalem.**
 - a. His ministry of teaching, healing, and bringing faith to people was about three years old.
 - b. In fact, three years prior, Jesus was healing hundreds of people around the Sea of Galilee.

- i. He then set off on endless journeys to distant lands that were off limits to Jewish people... where He taught and healed them too.
 - ii. All of these interactions brought more and more attention to Him as a prophet, a healer, a great teacher, and for some who believed He was the Messiah – the Chosen One to save the Jewish people.
 - iii. The only trouble was, none of these things were the whole truth, because Jesus was all of that... and He was God in the flesh.
 - 1. The true God of the universe had come to dwell among His people... and it wasn't just the Jewish people, but ALL nations and people.
 - 2. Jesus was and is the Messiah, who came to rescue all people from sin.
- c. As the people on the path to Jerusalem exclaimed hosanna, which can be translated as, "Save us, we pray!"...
 - i. Many of the people who welcomed Jesus that day were hoping to be saved... not so much from their sins... but from an oppressive government in the Roman rule.
 - ii. Rather than following Jesus for who He truly is, the crowd welcomed a political and military savior.
 - iii. And in just a few short days, this same crowd would turn on Jesus... seeking to kill the very Person they welcomed with praise and thanksgiving.
 - iv. The "bandwagon fans" welcomed Jesus, and the Pharisees saw them and said we're getting nowhere... the whole world is going after Him!

IV. **Going after Jesus is not about being a fan, it's about faith.**

- a. A fan knows all kinds of facts about their favorite person, but they don't have a relationship with that person.
- b. In last week's reading from Philippians, the Bible says, "8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ...¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death." (Philippians 3:8a, 10)
 - i. Nothing in this world is more important than knowing Jesus – and this doesn't mean knowledge... like a bunch of facts about Him or wearing a cross around our necks... it means we believe that He came into the world to save us from our sins.
 - ii. Plenty of people know some Scripture and the basics about Jesus, but knowledge will not save anyone, only God's saving grace through faith connects us to Him in a relationship.
- c. Some of you might be asking, what is faith... what is this relationship that is deeper than knowing about someone, and instead knowing them?

- i. For one thing, faith is not something we have because we learn a lot or do good things... faith comes by the hearing of the Good News that Jesus died and rose to save us from our sins... (Romans 10:17) and Holy Spirit is at work to create faith in us.
- ii. Second, faith is believing or trusting in God and that He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – our Creator... our Redeemer or Savior... and our constant Presence and Helper.
- iii. As Hebrews 11:1 puts it, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain [or confident] of what we do not see.”
 - 1. We are sure of the promises of God that He forgives us in the name of Jesus... that He will bring us to heaven one day... that Jesus will return, and we will be part of a great resurrection and renewal of all things.
 - 2. We hope in these things with eager expectation because we know our Lord as a God who never fails His people.
- iv. We are drawn deeper into a relationship with Jesus as we get to know Him better and better... through His Word.

V. **Going after Jesus is not part-time, but forever.**

- a. The crowd couldn't get enough of the superstar Jesus, but when they realized He was no earthly king who would liberate them, they screamed with all their might... “Crucify Him!”
- b. All without understanding the rescue plan of God, that His Son must die... that Jesus' blood must be shed to cover and forgive the sins of all people.
- c. Jesus died to forgive our sins and rose again to announce that we are not guilty (Romans 4:25) – and as we come to faith in Him by God's grace alone... we become more than a fan... but we know Him.
- d. During this Holy Week, I invite you to go after Jesus, not as a bandwagon fan, but as a believer who trusts in the promises of God! Amen.