

# Sermon Series – John 12:23-26

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*Preached on Palm Sunday, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012*

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## **Palm Sunday**

Processional Reading:	Matthew 21:1-11
Old Testament Reading:	Zechariah 9:9-12
Psalm:	Psalm 118:19-29
Epistle Reading:	Philippians 2:5-11
Gospel Reading:	John 12:23-37
Gospel Reading:	John 12:44-50

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### **When you trust in Christ, you glorify Him and, in turn, bring honor to yourself.**

In our second Gospel lesson today, Christ talks about trust. Why is it so difficult to trust anyone in the world today? Partially it is because we are told to trust in advertisers and politicians, people we hardly know and who certainly do not always have our best interests in mind. Dwight Moody (1837-1899) was an American Evangelist and founder of such places as The Moody Bible Institute and Moody Publishers. Moody was once asked what his favorite verse from the Bible was. His response was Isaiah 12:2, "Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." When asked about the reason why this verse was so special to him, his reply was, "You can travel first class or second class to heaven. Second class is, 'When I am afraid, I will trust.' First class is, 'I will trust, and not be afraid.'" First class is clearly the better way." Why would anyone want to consider second class? There really is no good reason. However, for some of us, trusting in someone can be very difficult. When we trust in someone, we completely relinquish our control and rely on the one we have trust in. The first part of that Gospel reading today,

verses twenty-three through twenty-six, focus on putting your trust in Christ. When you put your trust in Christ you glorify Him, and in turn, you bring honor upon yourself.

In the second Gospel lesson, the time is Sunday before Passover. There are throngs of people coming out to meet Jesus as He is coming into the city of Jerusalem. At this point in time, there could be as many as two million people swarming into Jerusalem for Passover. Passover was one of the three feasts where a Jew was required to travel from where they were living to the Temple and make a sacrifice. As you can imagine, the swarms of people that assembled in the city increased the usual population of 80,000 to 100,000 to well over three million people during the Passover. At the time Jesus entered the city, people would have been standing shoulder to shoulder with each other, inns would have been full, and the streets would have been bursting with vendors and shoppers. While all of this big-city hustle and bustle was going on, Jesus approached the city and crowds of people surrounded Him. You have to keep in mind that there were people who saw Him raise Lazarus from the dead and they saw Him heal two blind people just days beforehand. Word traveled quickly that this prophet was near Jerusalem and these crowds came out to meet Him before He even made it to the entry gates. In a way, Jesus had evoked a demonstration and the Sanhedrin and the Pharisees witnessed everything. They did not like Jesus and because of the power He had to stir up the people. They planned to get rid of Him...sometime. As Jesus rode toward the gates of the city, St. Luke records that He looked over the city and begins to weep. If only the people knew the peace that stood before them. However, the people did not understand Jesus or the kind of King He was. After the Feast of the five-thousand, the people wanted to whisk Jesus off to Jerusalem and crown Him king

immediately. But, it was not His time. Now, they assemble around Him and threw palm branches and coats in His path while yelling, “Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna to the Son of David!” They are still seeking a king to drive out the Romans who have oppressed the Jews for so long. Yet, He rode in on a humble donkey, an animal of peace. I am certain that the people expected their king, the one to drive out and eliminate the Roman occupation of Jerusalem, to ride in on a white stallion. Nonetheless, He is mounted on a donkey, on a colt. He is there to save the people from their sins, not the Roman government. St. Matthew records that Jesus did this to fulfill prophecy.<sup>1</sup> God’s time table is moving forward regardless of anyone else’s plans. The prophet Zechariah recorded over five hundred years earlier that the King would ride in on a donkey and this king would be the Prince of Peace.<sup>2</sup> The people were seeking some type of an earthly king and instead, Jesus was bringing them a Heavenly King. As this crowd continued to mod Jesus outside the gates of Jerusalem, the Sanhedrin and Pharisees witnessed the people following Him. Although the Sanhedrin and Pharisees were not originally going to kill Jesus during the Passover, they observed this demonstration of people and determined that Jesus is a threat. They are going to have accelerate their initial plans and kill Him sooner rather than later. As God’s plan continues to play out, the people rallying for a king and the Sanhedrin and Pharisees conspire to destroy this prophet quickly, Jesus kept moving forward even though He knew what lay directly ahead of Him – several days of torment, anguish, and eventual death. Jesus trusted in the Father to move forward. We encounter similar times in our lives, when we feel the call to move forward even though the path is uncomfortable and distressing. Perhaps you have felt

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 21:4

<sup>2</sup> Zechariah 9:9-10

this urging to move forward, too. Possibly, after many years of not attending worship, you pick up a Bible and start to read God's Word. You probably felt the pokes and prods of the Holy Spirit illuminating your heart and informing you to go to worship. Move forward! Maybe you felt this the last time you had a dinner with a friend who doubted or even denied Christianity. You felt the Holy Spirit nudge you to tell your friend about Jesus Christ. Move forward! You must trust in the Lord. He knows what is right and, after all, it is His plan.

St. John records a shift in events as Jesus enters Jerusalem. Earlier in St. John's Gospel, Jesus proclaimed in the Temple that He was sent from the Father. Some of the people who heard Him tried to arrest Him, but no one laid a hand on Him because it was not His hour.<sup>3</sup> Again, St. John records that the Pharisees heard Him teach that the Father bore witness to the things Jesus taught. When they tried to arrest Him, no one arrested Him, because His hour had not yet come.<sup>4</sup> However, in today's Gospel reading, St. John records Jesus Himself saying that "The hour has come." His death is imminent. The Sanhedrin and the Pharisees have desired to remove this man permanently and this is the week in which they will carry out their scheme. The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. The current time is now.<sup>5</sup> We read through the Bible and there are so many things that we read and we do not fully understand, yet it is God's Holy Word so we know that it is true. Our minds sometimes have a difficult time comprehending the Scriptures. Let me give you some examples of what I am

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<sup>3</sup> John 7:30

<sup>4</sup> John 8:20

<sup>5</sup> John 12:23

referring to. “The first will be last.”<sup>6</sup> To someone beginning to read the Bible, this does not make much sense. “The man who loves his life will lose it, and the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”<sup>7</sup> These verses seem to be paradoxes. Yet, the Father has the perfect plan that continues to unfold. We must unfold with the plan also, whether we want to or not. Jesus knew that this was the hour. He trusted the Father that the current time was perfect. When Jesus asked the question, “What should I say? Father save me from this hour?”<sup>8</sup> Jesus is asking a rhetorical question. Should the Father call into question the plan put into place from the beginning of time? Should the Father intercede and halt the death of His Son? No, this is the very hour Jesus became incarnate for. Jesus walked on the earth for thirty some years. This is the moment He has anticipated and waited for. There is no stopping the plan. When Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane, He was sweating blood because of the anxiety of the situation that lie ahead of Him.<sup>9</sup> He prayed “Father not My will, but Your will.” Jesus trusted in the current time. There are times you are told to do something and in the back of your mind you wonder “Is this really what I am supposed to be doing?” All of us have been through times like that. Perhaps you have recently left a church home because the teachings from the pulpit are not in line with the Holy Scriptures. You pray, “Lord should I stay or Lord should I go? This is my church home. Do I stay or do I go?” You must trust the Lord for the current time is His good and perfect time. As I was reading through Ecclesiastes, I was reminded of how every hour of our lives revolves around God’s good and perfect timing. Listen to these verses and think about how these verses,

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 19:30, Matthew 20:16, Mark 9:5, Mark 10:31, Luke 13:30

<sup>7</sup> John 12:25

<sup>8</sup> John 12:27

<sup>9</sup> Luke 22:44

written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, applies not only to your life, but also to the life of Jesus Christ:

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ecclesiastes 3:1** There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: <sup>2</sup> a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, <sup>3</sup> a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, <sup>4</sup> a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, <sup>5</sup> a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, <sup>6</sup> a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, <sup>7</sup> a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, <sup>8</sup> a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

Trust is also involved when we know what the outcome is, what awaits us on the other side of the adversity, and even though we must go through some type of horror or pain, we are willing to proceed because we know the outcome is good. As Dwight Moody said, it is easy to trust when you are afraid, but trusting so that you are not afraid is much more difficult. St. John records an analogy here from Jesus concerning a kernel of wheat. The kernel of wheat has to fall and die so that it produces many. I do not know how many gardeners there are here, but, just like the verse from Ecclesiastes indicates, there is a time to plant and a time to uproot. I can be lazy at times. In the fall, when the garden is done and the only thing left remaining in the garden are the dead tomato stalks, I can find many reasons to leave them be until spring. However, if one of those dead tomatoes falls to the ground, each and every one of the seeds within the dead tomato will begin to grow next spring. If I would have taken the time to clean up in the fall, I would not have to clean up all of these nasty tomato plants growing up throughout the garden. The same thing applies to this kernel of wheat. Jesus says that in order for many to be saved one has to die. Here He is talking about Himself. One single dead

seed produces vast amounts of growth later. As an example of this tremendous harvest, look around you. All of you are here in worship today. That alone is miraculous, right? One single seed has gone on to bring all of you into His favor. Let us not stop at Lighthouse Lutheran Church, because there are many congregations in this little town of Freedom, Pennsylvania. The Presbyterian congregation, the Baptist congregation, and the Roman Catholic congregation are also worshipping our Lord this day. One seed that died has fashioned worshippers in four congregations in this town. What about the next town over. Almost every street corner in the town of New Brighton has a church building. The next town over is the same. All of these congregations are assembled and worshipping today because of one seed that had to die. That is fantastic! Praise God! Jesus did all of these things because He had complete trust in the Father. He knew He was going to have to go through anguish. He knew that during this last week He would have to suffer pain and anguish because of the sins of the world and yet He did it willingly. That's glorious! Trust is certainly one of the finest ways you can complement someone. Jesus tells us when you trust in the Him the Father will honor that servant.

It is difficult to be a Christian, especially when it comes down to complete trust, yet this is exactly what it means to give your life to Christ. I want to share some information I recently received from the congregations in the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) located in Haiti. Twenty different congregations have recently joined the LCMC. The overseer of all of these congregations is Pastor Emmanuel Julien. Pastor Emmanuel is such a happy man. His words to me are encouraging. In a recent correspondence I said, "Pastor Emmanuel, tell me more about yourself." He said, "We are doing so many things with the Lord down here. The congregations are growing. God

is so good to us.” I could tell by reading his response that he is filled with the Holy Spirit. Once again, I said, “Tell me about your family. Do you have a wife and children?” Pastor Emmanuel responded, “We had an earthquake last year and I lost a child and my house. I now have nowhere to live. My wife and I walk from house to house to stay with the people who come to worship. We stay with them for two days and then pack up and go to stay somewhere else so as not to be a burden on anyone. My wife is pregnant again, but her pregnancy is not going very well. However, we know that God is good and we trust in Him.” Now there is a man who has trust. He has nowhere to live. He and his wife lost their child in the earthquake. They lost their only child whom they loved so dearly. They also lost their home. He has nothing. They walk from home to home and, yet every time I correspond with him he is happy because, “I know that God is good!” That is an example of trusting and not being afraid. Pastor Emmanuel is on a first class ticket to heaven right now.

In closing, I stumbled across an article want to share it with you. When you think about what Christ has done for you and how you react to that beautiful gift of eternal life, I want you to remember this article. This comes from something called *The Sunday School Times*. I do not know what much about the publication, but the article goes like this,

“One morning I went out to feed the birds. It was gray and cold and the ground was completely covered with snow. I stepped out on my porch and flung handfuls of bread crumbs onto the ground. I called for them to come. Nothing. They sat there and stared at me. They were cold and hungry and afraid. They had to trust in me. No matter what I did I could not convince the birds that I would not harm them. I was giving them a free gift. As I sat there and watched and waited, I could

not help to think that maybe I am seeing things from God's viewpoint. He offers, plans, waits, hopes, and longs for His children to see all the good things that He has given them, but He must watch and wait as I did on my timid friends. Wondering why they refuse such a great gift."

When you put your trust in Christ you glorify Him, and in turn, the Father honors you. He honors you because of the trust you put into Him. Trust Christ in all things. Trust in moving forward, trust in the current time, and trust in the outcome that will all be good to glorify Him and honor you.

# SERMON OUTLINE

## INTRODUCTION:

Dwight L. Moody's favorite verse was Isaiah 12:2: "I will trust, and not be afraid." He used to say: "You can travel first class or second class to heaven. Second class is, 'What time I am afraid, I will trust.' First class is, 'I will trust, and not be afraid.'" That is the better way. Why not buy a first-class ticket?

**Homiletical Point:** When you trust in Christ, you glorify Him and, in turn, bring honor to yourself.

1. The Sunday before Passover, Jesus entered Jerusalem through the crowds, riding on a donkey.

Explain: Jesus evokes a demonstration; Alters the Sanhedrin's time table; Fulfills prophecy (Zech 9:9)  
Jesus weeps entering Jerusalem (Luke); Hosanna (Save us) – did not understand Him  
They wanted an earthly king – He was a heavenly king

Illustrate: (\* swarming celebrities and sports figures \*)

Apply: Trust to move forward

2. Afterwards, Jesus told His follows that "the hour had come". (v. 23)

<sup>NIV</sup> **John 7:30** At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come.

<sup>NIV</sup> **John 8:20** He spoke these words while teaching in the temple area near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his time had not yet come.

Explain: The hour; Son of man; Glorified;

Illustrate: first-last; much given-much required; love life-lose it; hate life-eternal life

Apply: Trust the current time

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ecclesiastes 3:1** There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: <sup>2</sup> a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, <sup>3</sup> a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, <sup>4</sup> a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, <sup>5</sup> a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, <sup>6</sup> a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, <sup>7</sup> a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, <sup>8</sup> a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

3. Furthermore, the hour He referred to was the hour of His death. (v. 24)

Explain: Kernel of wheat falls – produces many seeds; Otherwise it remains a single seed

Illustrate: (\* Julie planting – the tomato plant \*)

Apply: Trust in the outcome

4. Jesus did this in complete trust of the Father, which brought glory to the Father and to Christ. (v. 25-26)

Explain: Love life = lose it; Hate life = eternal life; Serve me = I will be with you & Father will honor you

Illustrate: (\* Master and Commander – cut the mast \*)

Apply: Trust is finest manner of complimenting a man; How much do you trust in the Lord?

**CONCLUSION:** When you trust in Christ, you glorify Him and, in turn, bring honor to yourself.

One morning I wanted to feed the birds. It was gray and cold and the ground was covered with snow. I stepped out on the porch and flung them handfuls of crumbs and called to them. No. there they sat, cold and hungry and afraid. They did not trust me. As I sat and watched and waited, it seemed to me I could get God's viewpoint more clearly than ever before. He offers, plans, waits, hopes, longs for all things for our good. But He has to watch and wait as I did for my timid friends.—Sunday School Times.