

March 29, 2026

John 12:9-33

As we've walked through the Gospel of John and the encounters that people have had with Jesus, you may have noticed many different reactions to Jesus. There are some who are intrigued, but confused and perplexed like Nicodemus. There are some who are skeptical, but eventually worship him like Nathanael. There are some who are annoyed with him, but eventually praise him like the Samaritan woman. There are some who are enraged with Jesus, and even attempt to kill him. Today, we have many of these reactions to Jesus- some praise and glorify him, some want to kill him and the man he raised from the dead, some are jealous of him, some desperately want to hear from him. How does Jesus react to all this? He teaches. He teaches eternally important truths about him, his work, his glory, and what he has come to give us. If I had to sum all of it up, I'd say it like this: **Jesus is "Both And." 1. He is Both Mighty and Merciful, 2. He is Both Shamed and Glorified, 3. So Are His Followers.**

**1. He Is Both Mighty and Merciful.** Earlier in his ministry, Jesus was very low-key about his miracles- that's not the case anymore! He publicly raised Lazarus from the dead and is allowing himself to be praised by all these crowds of people. He's not hiding from them any more. All the people are shouting, "Lord, Save us! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," which is a direct quote from Psalm 118- they are putting down Palm branches, which don't simply mean victory, but eternal life and immortality! The crowds are publicly declaring Jesus to be the promised one from the Old Testament, the King who would come and save all of them from their enemies forever! And Jesus doesn't tell them to stop. He doesn't hide! Why? Because they are correct. Jesus is the King over the entirety of the universe. He is the mighty God over all creation. He alone can do all things, and he has indeed come to destroy God's enemies forever. But here's the catch- he doesn't do it in a way that you'd expect. When you think of a valiant hero, you think of someone who is strong, powerful, who crushes his enemies- and in the ancient world, that person would always ride a horse. Horses were tall, fast, powerful, fearless, and could easily trample anyone who got in the way. But Jesus doesn't come on a horse- he hops on a donkey purposefully. Why? To show that he's the promised King from the prophet Zechariah- the king comes on a donkey. Why is that significant? Because it shows that while Jesus is infinitely powerful and mighty, he's also infinitely *merciful*. A donkey was a beast of burden. It carried heavy loads and pulled grain mills. It was a strong animal and very important, but not valiant, not beautiful, not particularly fearsome. A donkey's value was not in who it could trample, but in who it could carry and serve. That is the kind of King Jesus is- no one is stronger than him, no one can be more violent and vengeful toward evil and no one will destroy more than him- but there is also no one who serves more than him, there is no one who is as kind or gentle or humble and glad to serve than him. Jesus is both infinitely mighty and infinitely merciful *at the same time*.

And everyone there (and here) needed to see that. The people likely thought that Jesus was going to defeat their enemies- the Romans and the Samaritans- their political adversaries, but that's not what Jesus came to defeat. The disciples, who at this time didn't quite understand what he was doing, thought something similar. The Pharisees and religious authorities were angry that people were flocking to him for religious guidance and not them, saying, "The whole *world* has gone after him," which is ironic because one day it will. *But how?* How would Jesus destroy the ultimate enemies- not the Romans, or whatever we think are the biggest problems in our world today, but death itself and the fact that we are condemned before God because of our sin? Not by trampling all people with a horse, but by serving like a donkey. By giving his life, by allowing his enemies to tear his back to shreds, by allowing his enemies to spit on him, by taking on his back the Hell we deserve, by dying in our place- *that* is how God wins. And don't be fooled- he is mighty, and when he comes again, he will not be on a donkey, but on the clouds with angels shaking the universe with their songs to destroy evil for good- but before he could do that, he wanted you, so he had to die first. Jesus is both infinitely powerful and mighty, and infinitely kind and merciful. Both, And.

**2. Jesus is Both Glorified and Shamed.** After Jesus rides into Jerusalem, he's teaching in the Temple Courts, and at this time, there was a wall that separated the Jews from the Gentiles- the Gentiles could not go into the inner courts or they would be killed. But there are some Greeks who evidently come to faith, we might call them "Old Testament Believers," but they weren't Jewish, and so they approach Philip, one of Jesus' disciples. This might have been because Philip is a Greek name, so they thought he might be more likely to get Jesus to come out to preach and teach so they could hear him, too! Philip hesitates, and we aren't sure why, but when he and Andrew do come and tell Jesus about it, Jesus reacts in a striking way: "Now the time has come for me to be glorified." Okay- so Jesus is going to do something that shows his power and might and beauty and everyone is going to see how majestic he is- he is going to fully show his glory. But then he talks about a seed- unless a seed dies in the ground, it cannot produce fruit. What's he saying? If these Greeks are going to be a part of his people, if anyone is going to be a part of God's family, Jesus is going to have to be rejected. He is going to be led outside the city to die like a criminal. In order for there to be eternal life, he has to suffer eternal death. In order for sins to be forgiven, he has to be crushed. And as Jesus begins to think about this, he admits that his soul is in torment. Not only is he going to have thorns jammed into his skull, his back shredded to bits, his hands and feet impaled into a block of wood, his body slowly suffocate in the heat of the sun, and all the punishment that the atrocities of the world deserve placed onto him, he's filled with sadness- but he still chooses this. And he even says, "Glorify your name" to the Father, and then something incredible happens- the Father responds and says, "I have, and I will!" Jesus is going to be glorified! But he's also talking about his death on the cross! How can this be true? How can this most shameful, disgusting, wretched, evil thing be a glorifying thing? How can Jesus be eternally shamed by his people, dying naked while people laugh at time- how can that be glorifying? How can you see the greatness and power and beauty of Jesus in the most cruel, inhumane, unjust thing to ever happen in history?

Because on the Cross, as Jesus is dying in my place, I see just how infinitely holy God is. If *this* is what Jesus needed to suffer in order for me to be saved, then God must be so holy, so perfect, and therefore so rightfully angry about what I've done in my life, and I see first hand how infinite the gap truly is between God's standard of holiness and my life. But I also see how greatly he loves me. On the cross, the Son of God showed how vast, how infinite, how free his love for us truly is. We can see just how low God was willing to sink, just how much he was willing to suffer, just how foolish he was willing to look, just how shameful he was willing to be, just how greatly he was willing to suffer, all to have us. And as this melts our hearts what Jesus says becomes true- he will gather all peoples to himself as he is lifted up. There is no other God who would do this for you. There is no God who is so holy that he must punish evil, but also so merciful that he would endure that same punishment you deserve, even without you desiring or asking for it, because he loves you that desperately. On the Cross- God's holiness and divine wrath shine, but his mercy and compassion and relentless, endless love for you shines even more brightly. *"If my sins give me alarm and my conscience grieve me, let your cross my fear disarm; peace of conscience give me. Help me see forgiveness won by your holy passion. If for me he slays his Son, God must have compassion!"* On the Cross- Jesus is both shamed and glorified. Both, And.

**3. So Are His Followers.** Why does Jesus need to say all these things about following him, the cross, and why does the Father need to support it from Heaven? Because all the crowds that had celebrated and praised Jesus understood his power and might, but not his mercy. They understood his glory, but they didn't understand how his glory is revealed in his ultimate shame. They didn't understand that Jesus is both merciful and mighty, both glorified and shamed, and therefore, they didn't understand that if they were to truly be his followers, they would be all these things as well. Christians cannot, and really do not need to cling to things in this world like wealth, honor, beauty, comfort, relationships, and even their own lives, advantages. If being a Christian means following Christ, then let's be logical- did Christ have wealth, honor, beauty, comfort, advantages in this world? Not really. Sure, he had great friends and some great moments, but he was ultimately abandoned and betrayed and tortured to death. If that is what happens to Jesus, then his followers should expect something similar! We shouldn't expect to be comfortable here! We shouldn't expect everyone to honor us! We shouldn't expect life to go well here! But here's the beautiful part- although we are very much shamed here on earth- and that can look many different ways depending on whatever cross God has us bear- we are glorified- we are praised and honored by the only one whose opinion truly matters. The beautiful irony of the Gospel is this: once you let go of your insistence that you are good enough, and you trust in Jesus who was good enough in your place, the Father declares you as good enough. Once you let go of your wealth and trust in Jesus, the truest, most lasting wealth is yours. Once you let go of your own beauty, status, power, eternal beauty, status, and power are yours because Jesus earned them for you. He who loves his life will lose it, he who understands all these things aren't eternal

and trusts in Jesus above all, gains these things forever. Christians are often both completely shamed, but also completely, eternally glorified and beautiful and powerful.

A good example of this is a man named Jim Elliot. He was a Christian missionary, 28 years old, brand new baby, and he and a few others dedicated themselves to bringing the Gospel to a tribe in the Ecuadorian jungle called the “Huaorani.” This tribe was notoriously violent- no one ever returned from their area. But Jim and other missionaries spent time dropping food and gifts from planes to gain their trust, and eventually they landed near their camp, hoping to make contact. The missionaries got out of the planes, made contact, and were immediately killed. But after a while, his wife, Elisabeth Elliot and others made contact with the Huaoranis and many were brought to faith. In his diary, years before he died, Eliot wrote, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” Christians are *both* people who lost many, many things, wealth, status, jobs, friends, loved ones, *and* we are also the ones who have gained all things- life, joy, peace, and eternal friendship with the God of Heaven. *Both, And.* Amen.