

**Bought with a Price: Jesus, His Blood, Your Life (Part 1)**  
**Understanding His “Secret Ambition”**  
**John 12:12-50**

**Introduction: Nothing But the Blood**

Good morning! Please open your bibles to John 12. This morning, we will be taking a break from 1 Corinthians and begin our journey into Holy Week, remembering the way of the cross and the joy of resurrection, which forms the foundation of our faith as believers in Jesus Christ.

However, our Easter theme this year does come out of 1 Corinthians. If you recall from a few weeks ago, Paul makes this audacious, beautiful, statement:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

“You are bought with a price...” That price was nothing less than the very blood of Jesus Himself. But let’s step back and ask the question: why the blood? Why the brutality? Some have argued that the emphasis on Jesus’s blood makes God appear as if He is some kind of blood-thirsty monster – yikes! Others say this perpetuates violence and is divine child-abuse. Is that true?

Friends, I hope to show you over the next week that this is most emphatically NOT true, and that rather than the cost of redemption being blood viewed as something impugning God’s character, it actually displays His beauty, wonder, and marvelous grace/love.

Let’s pray...

**Palm Sunday & Jesus’s “Secret Ambition”**

Today marks what is commonly known as Palm Sunday according to the church calendar. Palm Sunday commemorates when Jesus enters Jerusalem for the final week of His life (which we refer to as “Holy Week”). Palm Sunday also reminds us that both the disciples and the crowds assumed that this would be the beginning of God’s victory through Jesus to at last unveil His messianic identity as the true King of Israel and begin His judgement/defeat of Rome, the renewal of Israel and the full inauguration/introduction of God’s kingdom. And yet everyone got it totally wrong.

Some of you may remember a popular Christian song by Michael W. Smith, “Secret Ambition”. The main point of the song is that Jesus had a secret agenda, and “ambition” that no one saw coming. Here is the chorus:

“Nobody knew His secret ambition,

Nobody knew His claim to fame.

He broke the old rules steeped in tradition;

He tore the veil away.

Questioning those in powerful position,

Running to those who called His name.

But nobody knew His secret ambition

Was to give His life away.”

This morning, we will reflect on Jesus’s final words to the crowds as He enters Jerusalem, where He shares with them a different idea of what it means to be Israel’s Messiah, and His secret ambition to give His life away for their sake, wherein His blood would become the salvation of the world.

Let’s begin here in John 12...

### **Exposition of John 12:12-50**

#### ***Triumphal entry?***

John 12:12-19

Notice everyone’s reactions. John tells us that Jesus’s prophetic actions were in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, in which the prophet proclaims the return of God, the King, to dwell and rule among the people. Yet Zechariah describes the Messiah, God’s agent, in sacrificial terms as one who will be pierced (12:10) and a shepherd who will be struck (13:7).

However, at the time, His disciples misunderstood this. Secondly, the crowds were all there because they heard about Lazarus being raised from the dead and assumed that Jesus was preparing to do more miracles, take up His throne as Israel’s king, and take down Rome. And the Pharisees...well, they are just upset about people following Jesus. In other words, everyone misunderstood what He was truly doing.

#### ***The Greeks seek after Jesus***

John 12:20-26

Next, we see Greek or Gentile worshippers (God-fearers?). Now, at first glance, it is an odd response by Jesus. You can imagine Philip and Andrew scratching their heads and say, “So, do you want to see these guys?” Again, they are missing the point that Jesus is making. He is telling them that He will be that grain of wheat, and anyone who wants to truly find Him will only find Him by going the way of sacrifice and death to self. We’ll come back to that...

#### ***Son of Man Must be Lifted Up***

John 12:27-33

Here we get one of the more personal statements of Jesus, and a better sense on what His secret ambition was, and the relationship to blood.

How will Jesus be glorified by the Father? By being “lifted up” ...what does this mean exactly?

The allusion here is to Isaiah 52:13, where the prophet says the following:

Isaiah 52:12-15a

Here the prophet speaks of one who will do exactly what Jesus is alluding to – offer Himself to be lifted up, in a sacrificial manner and thereby “sprinkle” the people. Now, sprinkling was a sacrificial/cultic act which was designed to prepare people, altars, vessels for communion with God.

We see this for example with Moses preparing the first altar and the people for sacrifice in God's presence after the Exodus (Exodus 24). Blood is also used on the Day of Atonement as a way to purify and atone for sins. But notice what the result of the sprinkling is here in Isaiah:

Isaiah 52:15b

To open the eyes to see, open the mind to understand – in short, it makes a pathway for the worshipper to experience God.

In short, *the purpose of blood is to cleanse, purify, and atone for the sins of worshippers so that they may commune with the Holy One of Israel (who wants to commune with them!).*

This is the underlying point that I don't want you to miss!

Let's go back to John and notice again what Jesus's being "lifted up" is supposed to accomplish:

John 12:31-32

To draw all people to Himself...

***The reaction of the crowd***

John 12:34

Again, they simply don't get it...at least not yet!

***Jesus's final plea for faith***

John 12:35-36a

Here He pleads with them, "Come into the light!"

***The Blindness of the crowd to Jesus's agenda***

John 12:36b-43

However, they can't see yet...why? Because the Son of Man has not yet been lifted. The blood has not yet been shed, the Holy Spirit has not yet been released to dwell in the hearts of the people.

But nevertheless, listen to the final words of Jesus...

***Jesus and the Father have the same agenda for His "blood"***

John 12:44-50

He cries out to say the agenda of the Father, and of Himself, is one and the same. The goal of Jesus being lifted up will be to save the world, not to judge it. Though if someone rejects Jesus, then that will be their judgement – they will be excluded from the Father's gift of life, for there is no other way. More so, the Father's plan results in eternal life!

**Main Idea:**

*The secret agenda of Jesus (and God the Father) is that through Him being “lifted up”, His shed blood would bring salvation to the world by enabling people to move out of (spiritual) darkness and into the light of God’s presence.*

**Application: How deep the Father’s Love...**

### **Discussion Questions**

- 1) What did Jesus mean by saying He would be “lifted up”? (hint: see Isa. 52:15)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) What kept the crowds from understanding Jesus’s true ambition? Why do you think God purposed things this way?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) How does Jesus describe the unity between Him and the Father in regard to the overall plan and purpose of Him being “lifted up”? What does the unity between Jesus and God tell us about the extravagant love both the Father and the Son have for us?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4) When you think about God, what kinds of images/ideas/thoughts come to your mind? Does your view of God actually line up with what Scripture reveals? How might Jesus’s speech in John 12 help correct or change the way you view God’s plan of salvation and the motives behind it?