

When All Was Right With The World

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

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Crossroads Ministries

301 S. 8th Street
Opelika, Alabama 36801

Website: www.fbcopelika.com

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers

It was 26 years ago that that young man, he was my age at the time, that young man offered that same challenge to me. You know, if you haven't been with us in the last few months or maybe you are a guest or a visitor, what we know as Master Life, this Bible study, is based on John 15:5 and Jesus makes this very audacious statement, he says, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He that abides in me and I in him, shall bear much fruit for apart from me you can do nothing." Today we find ourselves in John 12 and as I mentioned, if you're a guest or a visitor with us, we've been spending this calendar year working our way toward John 15 where Jesus makes that incredibly audacious statement. But today in John 12, we find ourselves at a time in the life of the ministry of Jesus that may seem very opposite to our season today but as we are going to notice, is very much in line with the way that we are living life today. We find ourselves beginning in verse 12 of what we know as Palm Sunday. This is the time where Jesus comes in riding in on the donkey. This is the time where they throw not only the palm leaves but blankets and such and they declare that he is the King of the Jews. But I'm going to declare to you today that this is one of the few rare moments in life where all was right with the world.

Now, that's one of those statements that we use pretty frequently whether we realize it or not. Let me give you an example that may resonate with just a few people today. Say there is a time in your life where your preferred team wins a big ballgame. What do you do after? You say, ""All is right with the world. Or maybe there is a business deal that has been working for years or maybe there is a family member that has been strained from you for years and all of a sudden things are reconciled and things work out the way they're supposed to, there is that brief moment when you say, "All is right with the world," and there is just this collective sigh of, "Yes." Today in John 12, we're going to see one of the very few moments where we as humanity got it right, one of the few moments where all was right in the world, and what I want to challenge you today is to see what happened in this passage and to allow it to be applied to your life. What if what they did were to be applied to your life not just this day but in the days leading up to this very, what we know as, busy season of life where in John 12, all was right with the world.

Beginning in verse 12, it says,

12 On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 Took branches of palm

trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. 14 And Jesus, when he had found a young donkey, sat thereon; as it is written, 15 Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, your King comes, sitting on a donkey's colt. 16 These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him. 17 The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. 18 For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. 19 The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive you how we prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.

Now, today I just want to focus on that very last statement. It is spoken by those who oppose everything Jesus said, everything that he did; every miracle, every amazing supernatural feat that he performed, they always had an excuse for it. In fact, one time they even claimed that he was an agent of the devil himself, Beelzebub. These individuals, they despised everything that Jesus did, everything that he said, and notice what they said, "the whole world is gone after him." It's that one moment, it's that one day where we finally got it right. All was right with the world and what I want to share with you this morning, just three very basic constructs. How can what they observed that day become what we observe in our own life in the days ahead.

The first thing I want you to notice is the magnitude here. It says, "and the whole world." Now that's one of those words of metaphorical use that oftentimes when we go to Scripture we say, "Well, I know it doesn't mean each and every one without exception. After all, the Pharisees were against him, but surely it must just mean a few segments or sections or the religious zealot sorts," but no. Notice what they said, "the whole world is gone after him." What we're going to notice is that for a brief moment in time, those from various upbringings, those from various sociological backgrounds, those from a variety of sources, all collectively gather around and what do they do? They go after Jesus.

I want you to turn back to John 1. In fact, over the next few moments, I'm going to take you on a journey through the Gospel of John. I know we've been through this book of the Bible all through this calendar year, but I want you to see the magnitude of this word, this phrase, "the entire world," because I think there are times like this where you say, "Well, surely it was just a segment. Surely it was just a section of people. It couldn't have been everybody. It couldn't have been the rich and the poor and the wealthy and those that had education and those that didn't." No, no, they said the whole world.

Notice in John 1:9, speaking of Jesus, he "was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." That's not speaking of a certain segment or even a certain demographic. It says that the entire world is who he came unto and he presented himself to the entire world.

Now fast forward to verse 29 of the same chapter. This is John the Baptist. It says, "The next day John saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The magnitude that the ministry of Jesus, the sacrifice of Jesus wasn't just for a selective group, it wasn't just for a section of people, but it was for the entirety of humanity.

You go into the next page or two of your Bible and you get to that famous John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Then in verse 17 it says, "I came not to condemn the world but the world through him might be saved."

If you turn to chapter 4, verse 42, we have the story of the woman who is at the well. Jesus reveals to her more than anyone has ever known about her life. She goes back into town. She garners the attention of those that are gathered. She says, "There is a prophet, there is a man, who has told me more about myself than I even know of myself." They come and they hear of Jesus. Verse 42 of John 4, it says, "And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of your saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

As you fast forward throughout the Gospel of John, I'm going to save a little time and energy today, I'm not going to go through all 50 plus references in this Gospel of this phrase, but in John 8:12, Jesus makes this statement, he says, "I am the light of the world."

And I want to encourage you to go one book further. Go to the book of Acts 2. In Acts 2 we find ourselves not at Passover week like in John 12, we find ourselves at what we know as Pentecost. This is 50 days removed from the Passion Week, 50 days removed from the crucifixion event and the eventual resurrection, and I want you to notice what takes place at this famous day. Now, we tend to focus on the preaching of Peter, we tend to focus on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the cloven tongues and all those things, but I want you to notice what verse 5 says of Acts 2, it says, "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven."

So when the Pharisees in John 12, when Jesus is riding on the donkey, when they said the whole world is gone after him, they didn't mean just a small segment, they didn't mean just a slice of the pie. It means from every nation. From every group. From every background. The magnitude is incredible because when we come to this concept that the world went after him, I think oftentimes it's easy to think, well, it was just this group or it was just that group and their life doesn't look like mine, it doesn't line up with mine, so therefore I get a pass here. But notice it says the whole world was gone after him.

It's not just the magnitude of the world, it's the mission. You'll notice in John 12:19, it says they went after him, which says to me that there were things in their life, there were opportunities in their life which could have garnered their attention, which could have allowed them to be focused on rather than Jesus, but it says they purposely and they willingly, they wanted to go after, they wanted to be there, they wanted to put the palm

leaves, they wanted to be in his presence when he rode into that eastern gate there on that temple mount. You see, it wasn't just the magnitude of all backgrounds and all demographics, it was the fact that they had a very specific mission on this day, they went after Jesus.

Now, it's real easy to think, well, in that day it was a little easier than today. They didn't have all the constraints. They didn't have all the things that were pulling and tugging at them. It was just an easier time of life. This morning I beg to differ. In fact, I want to give you three very specific illustrations from 2,000 years ago from these individuals and I want you to see how these areas of life strike an eerie parallel to your life today.

The first issue that would have been a distraction, the first issue that would have naturally kept somebody from going after Jesus that day was the distraction or the strain of or the need for financial security. You know, we celebrate this as Palm Sunday, right? But in the Jewish culture and in the Jewish tradition, Sunday was the first day of the week. Their Sunday was our Monday. I mean, think about it, how many times at work have you said, "It's been Monday all week long"? Why? Because that is the day that you've got the most done. That's the day you've got to catch up from the weekend. That is the day where you've got to get everything started right. Imagine if you were a business owner in Jerusalem, this is Passover, this is the time where people from every nation have gathered. There is no better time for your business. In fact, allow me to say that this event in John 12 2,000 years ago would have been Jerusalem's Black Friday. Everybody was there. This was the day to sell my wares. This was the day for my restaurant to be packed. This was the day for all that to work out. But what does it say they did? It says they went after Jesus. They discovered, they realized there was something even more important than making a profit. There was something more important than making a deal.

You know, some years ago the church I was serving at, we had a humorous experience. We had to buy all new video equipment for our television ministry and the company that we purchased from, they were owned by, managed and every employee was Jewish in background. They were Jewish by faith. They were Jewish by culture. And they could not understand, this was what was so funny about it, they could not understand that on a Sunday morning at 9 o'clock why we weren't answering the phone. We were all in here. We were all in this service. We were all singing and celebrating in Bible study. The offices were vacant because everybody was on the other side of campus. They couldn't grasp it because in their tradition Sunday is our Monday.

This would have been the day of the week that you could not have afforded to skip the meeting. This would have been the day of the week you would say, "Do you know what? I could do some stuff later but I've got to make this staff meeting. I've got to do this. I've got to get this report in." And yet what do we see? They went after Jesus. The report could wait. The meeting could be delayed. There was something of a more important nature.

It wasn't just their finances, though, how about their social life? You see, this was Passover week and much like our season this time of year where you've got family that

you know of and have any of you had one of those moments where you discover at this time of year you've got family you didn't even know of? They just kind of show up and they just become a part of things. Passover, it said they were there from every nation and that means they had their aunts and uncles and their cousins and their third cousins and everybody that has been twice and third removed, and all those folks, everybody is showing up. Can you imagine the social constraints that would have been on them during this day? They've got to make sure that they say all the hellos to the right people and to give all the right time to the people who need their attention.

Do you remember the story when Jesus was 12? They come in for the Passover the same week that here is in John 12, just about 20 plus years earlier. They are on their way back home and we often give Mary and Joseph a hard time because the next day they discover they didn't know where Jesus was. They said, "Well, we thought he would be among the family," because in those days you would have 100 plus family members, and don't give Mary and Joseph a hard time, Mary and Joseph were in what we call zone coverage. Now, for those of you and I made an allusion to this during the baby dedication, understand this, that when you have your first child, you technically are what we call cover 2. There are two defenders for every receiver. All right, do you get it? Once you have your second child, you're in man-to-man coverage. Once you have three or more, you are in zone. That means all you have is an area and if they are in your area, you're responsible, if they're not, you're cut free, you're good to go. I mean, that's how we live our life. Our life right now, Tracy and my life, isn't I've got this one and I've got that one, it's I've got this time in this place and whoever happens to be there, I've got it, baby. Don't worry about it.

They were in zone coverage. They would have lived a life of zone coverage this week. There were so many appointments, so many meetings, so many people that this was the one chance in the year they had the opportunity to spend some time with, but what did they decide to do? They went after Jesus. You see, it's the one time, one of the very few times we have in the Bible where we actually get it right. We put aside a profit margin, we put aside those human relationships and say, "Do you know what? Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto us." By the way, that passage in Matthew 6 comes in the context Jesus is talking about the food in our belly, the clothes on our back, and the roof over our head. He says, "If you'll just put me first, I'll take care of all the rest."

And finally, it would have been the religious obligation. This was Passover. This was much like our Christmas season. In fact, I had a Jewish man several years ago, he didn't want to use the word Christmas to me. He said, "But pastor, I understand this is your busy season, right?" In other words, our Christmas with the constant opportunities was their Passover. This was every day there was a new opportunity. Every day there was something they had to do. In fact, this is why Jesus went into the temple on this day and he overturned the tables because people were coming from far away and they could not afford or they could not bring the proper sacrifices so they were making an exchange and Jesus got mad because they were basically charging too much interest and such. So here

you've got people worried about, "Do I have the right sacrifice? Do I have the right change? Do have the right currency?"

And on top of that, if you take the chronology of Palm Sunday in Exodus 12, this would have been the day that they would have acquired the Passover lamb. I want you to think about that for just a moment. Not only do you have to make sure you've got the right amount of turtledoves, the right amount of this, and you've done the proper exchange, but somehow in the midst of all of the family that is around you, you've got to go and find a lamb without blemish, and then according to Exodus 12, you've got to keep it up for three straight days. Now, can you imagine? How do you respond, what is your disposition went you are sleep deprived? Can you imagine an undomesticated animal that has been sleep deprived?

So I would say that these people had their plate pretty full. Not only financially, not only socially, but even their religious expression. But what did they do? According to chapter 12, verse 19, it says the whole world, they went after Jesus. The world was right for one moment in time and how does their world begin to look like ours? Let's look at these same items in our world today. Let's look at the financial aspect. This is the season of the year where most of us will spend the greatest amount of money and that puts a strain on any family or on any person, no matter what your size as far as quantity is concerned. Again, the researchers tell us that we will spend more this season than we even did last year at this time. We have schedules and end-of-the-year deadlines and annual reports and the end of a month and the end of a quarter and the end of year, and how easy is it to brush aside the more important matters because you've got to get that year closed out properly.

You see, we've got financial strains as well and we even have social issues. I mean, this is the time and the season, I don't know what yours looks like but the other day my wife and I sat down with our calendars and even though they were electronic, I think we blew a circuit on our phones. We have so much that is on those calendars. We've got so much that is going on not only in the life of the church, the life of our family, the life of our children, and this is one of those times in the year where there is so much going on sometimes you can lose focus of what's most important.

Some years ago, I had the privilege, I took my three boys when they were a little bit younger, I took them to a high school football game. It was a man's night out. We're going to go to a local high school football game. We were going to do what men do. We were going to go and have fun. We were going to grunt. We were going to enjoy ourselves. Well, on the way they said, "Hey, daddy, daddy," because like most young kids they said, "We want to go to McDonald's! We want to go to McDonald's!" I said, "Okay, that's fine." So we went to McDonald's and as a parent, those of you that our parents, I endured that, went through that. We got back in the car and we are headed to the ballgame. One of my sons piped up and he said, "Hey, dad, can we go back to McDonald's tomorrow?" Now I don't know about your house but let me tell you about the Meyers' household: we had a rule when our kids were young, we only went to McDonald's once a week. That was it. Mom and dad could not handle any more, okay?

So it was a rule once a week and I said, "Son, you know the rule, we only go once a week. Why would we go tomorrow?" Listen to what he said, he said, "I know that, daddy, but we want to go to McDonald's with you." You see, that night as a pastor of a church, we sat down and everybody who came through that restaurant came by and said hi to us, everybody sat down with us, and don't get me wrong, I appreciate the fellowship and I appreciate the friendship, but for that hour I spent more time shaking hands and hugging necks and doing all that instead of the focus which should have been my children at that moment.

You see, with all the parties and all the gatherings and all the social events, sometimes we can put more focus on our friends and our family than we can on Jesus. And notice what it says, they went after him. Speaking of that, how about our religious schedule? Have you seen the front of the messenger today? I mean, there are more services in the next month than any other time in our church's life. I mean, this is the time where if you want to make it to a service, boy, we've got some options. I mean, this is the time. There will be services here. There will be services in the community. There will be opportunities to do church as an entity all the next month.

I'm going to need to ask forgiveness from some of you for the following illustration so just forgive me in advance. There is a television show that my family and I really enjoy watching, it's called "The Middle." If you're not familiar with "The Middle" it's the story of a family that lives in Indiana. It's a mom and a dad and three kids. Do you see why we like it? They are always a day late and a dollar short and it just kind of resonates with the situations that they have with their children and we laugh and we've seen the same things raising ours. It's just one of those lighter hearted moments in our family's life where we sit down and watch a family that looks a lot like ours except those of you that have seen it, I want you to know our house is much cleaner than theirs but that's a whole other story.

One of my favorite episodes of the show is where their family in the midst of all that is happening at Christmas Eve, is attempting to attend a Christmas eve service, and in the process of attempting to go, they are trying to get all their schedules worked out, and about 30 minutes before they are supposed to be there, they are running through the house, they are trying to get dressed. They are yelling at each other, they are screaming at each other. They get in the car and they race around town. They run through the doors and, yes, they are seated in the pews and, yes, they are there on time, but their heart is nowhere near where it is supposed to be. You see, with so much that is happening this season, how easy is it to be in the right place at the right time but not with the right heart or focus?

What happens in this story? In the midst of the first day of the week, in the midst of all their family, in the midst of gathering a lamb and making sure it's up at night, according to this passage it says "and they went after him." You see, for one brief moment, we, humanity, we got it right. How can you get it right? I want to give you an example today because not only do we have the magnitude of the world, not only do we have the mission of going after Jesus, notice that last word in verse 19, they went after "him." It's a

personal pronoun. They went after Jesus. How does that happen in our lives? What does that look like as an individual? How can we see it not just as a story 2,000 years ago, not just as a challenge in a worship service, but how can we see it lived out?

Over the course of the next few days, there is a name you're going to hear around campus and some of you are probably very familiar with this name, some of you may hear it for the very first time this year, the name is Lottie Moon. Lottie Moon is not just a Christmas offering that we as a church participate in. Lottie Moon was a young lady, she was a missionary to China in the 1800's and kind of the quick story of her life is that she goes to China, she finds herself in an impoverished state, she doesn't have enough money to feed herself, she doesn't have enough money to take care of the children that she is bearing responsibility for. So she sends a letter back home to Cartersville, Georgia, and she says, "Would you and some other churches gather some funds for me? I just want to be able to feed these children to share the Gospel with them." A hundred plus years later, you and I are celebrating together in what we know as the Lottie Moon Christmas offering where we and tens of thousands of churches and believers will gather together and we will collect an enormous amount of money that doesn't go through all the "red tape," it goes straight into the ministries and to the persons of those missionaries all over the world. This is why you see the posters around campus. This is why you see advertisements all around our church life. But I think not just as an offering, I think the person of Lottie Moon serves as maybe one of the best examples of when you get all the world right in your world.

You see, oftentimes we see this story in John 12 and we say, "Yeah, but that was one moment in time and it was a group of people there and it looks good, but what about right now? What about me?" Lottie Moon found herself in a situation that may be kind of familiar to some of you. She was raised obviously in the 1800's. She was raised in a time period when she was not even allowed to vote. But she was raised in Virginia where her family was so wealthy they had the resources to send her to school not only for a bachelors degree but for a Masters degree. She went to the equivalent of the University of Virginia, the school they had for girls in those days. Her family was wealthy. They had land. They had resources. They had businesses. And yet at age 32, she left it all. At 32 years of age, she walked away from the wealth, she walked away and said, "The Lord has called me to go to China. The Lord has called me to share the Gospel with the children of China."

You see, she was willing to go after him. She put aside the call of financial security but she also put aside the strains of a social life, not just her family as far as her mom and her dad and her siblings, but at 32 years of age, a young man she had known for years proposed to her, desiring for her not to go, desiring to stay with him, to be married to him, to grow life together in a family, and she went to China anyway. She said, "No, the Lord has called me to China." She walked away not just from financial security, she walked away not only from her family, she walked away from a man who loved her and to which she loved reciprocally.

But there was also the issue of religious expression. You see, not only did Ms. Lottie Moon have a bachelors degree, not only did she have a Masters degree, incredibly rare in those days particularly for a young lady, but when she was in college, much like the hundreds of students that come on this campus every weekend, the Lord got a hold of her heart and there she left the comfort of her local church family, she left the comfort of those who had not only seen her grow up in the faith but had encouraged her in her faith. How easy would it have been to have that security of her family's money, the love of this young man, and a group of people around her who loved her and encourage her? But she went after Jesus and she makes her way to China and she finds herself in such a situation she does not have enough money to feed herself or these children she is ministering to. So she writes back home and says, "Is there any way you could help me out?"

You say, "Well, how does this relate to my life today?" Back in the late 1800's, how many millions of people were living a life just like everybody else that none of us even know about today, that we don't even care about, we've never even heard of, they're just a statistic? But we're still talking about Lottie Moon. We are still giving money in her name. We are still focusing on missions. Why? Because she did what they did in John 12, she went after Jesus and when we go after Jesus and we allow everything else to ride, as we say it in Texas, second saddle, when we go after Jesus primarily in our life, then everything else just works itself out.

John 12 when Jesus came in on the donkey, everything was right in the world. Beyond a football game, beyond a business deal, wouldn't it be nice if people would sit back and go, "All is right with the world"? You can when you allow Jesus to be our mission, when we allow him to be our focus. Then this very busy season all will be right in the world.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. You know, maybe this morning you are seated here in person or maybe you're on the other side of the cameras, and you realize for the first time that your existence, your life, the breath that you have been breathing, has really all been about yourself and about your desires and your passions and your wants, and you realize today maybe for the very first time, how important Jesus is for your life. Man, do I have some great news for you today. In order for Jesus to forgive you and to save you and to have that right relationship, you don't have to sign up for a bunch of classes, you don't have to check off a bunch of boxes, you don't have to cross the t's or dot the i's, you just need to have a real serious conversation with the Lord. You don't have to have this conversation out loud, in fact, you don't even have to say the same words I might say but maybe the conversation would kind of take this tone. "God, today I just want to confess what you already know about myself. I have spent the majority of my days, if not all of them, headed in a direction completely contrary to you. Lord, what I have done is what you call sin. I have not been where you want me to be. I have not done what you want me to do. I have not said what you have wanted me to say. And I definitely have not thought what you want me to think. And I realize that because of that, that I desperately desperately need Jesus. I believe that Jesus loved me so much that he was willing to be born on my behalf. I believe that Jesus loved me so much he was willing to live a sinless life on my behalf. I believe Jesus loved me so much he was willing to take the punishment of my sin on the cross. I believe that Jesus loved me so

much that three days later he rose from the dead so I could be forgiven and I could be saved. God, today I don't know all the answers to all the world's problems but I do know that Jesus is the answer to my sin problem. In the best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me, and I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe that's the conversation you had with the Lord today. We'd love the opportunity to have a conversation with you. We just want to celebrate what the Lord is doing in your life. Maybe today you just need to pray with somebody. Maybe today there is an actual decision that you need to come and talk with us about. Or maybe today is the day that the decision doesn't necessarily require coming to have a conversation with somebody, but maybe it means leaving the grounds today with a different focus and a different priority in this very very busy season.

Lord, as we come to this time, Lord, how grateful we are that no matter where we've been, what we've done, who we've been with, that much like the prodigal son, that your arms are opened wide and all you desire is for us to come back home, all you want is for us to be in your perfect will. So God, I pray that all the voices in the world would be shut down and only your voice would prevail at this time. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.