John 12:12-26

“Letting Go of You!”

I. INTRO:
A. Intro: Bart Starr, former quarterback of the Green Bay Packers, was describing to a group of businessmen how his coach, Vince Lombardi, held absolute power. He stated that, as you entered Vince’s office, you noticed a huge mahogany desk with an impressive organization chart behind it on the wall. The chart had a small block at the top in which was printed: “Vince Lombardi, Head Coach and General Manager.” A line came down from it to a very large block in which was printed: “Everybody Else!”

1. Title: Letting Go of You!

B. 12:1-11 (6 days before) 12:12-19 (5 days before) 12:20-50 (4 days before) 13-17 (the night b4).

1. Ch. 12 was the beginning of Christ’ last week on earth.
2. John devotes ch. 12-17 to the final preparation of Jesus’ disciples.
3. This underscores the importance of what Jesus said & did during this time.

C. John now transports us from the sleepy village of Bethany to the bustling metropolis of Jerusalem.

1. With Passover only 5 days away, the city is bursting w/people who have come to celebrate.
2. Most of them had either witnessed Jesus bringing Lazarus out of the tomb or had at least heard about it. Now this miracle worker is coming to their city!

II. TRIUMPHAL ENTRY! (12-19)
A. Hosanna! (12-15)

B. This moment was perhaps the high mark of Jesus’ popularity & influence.

1. Yet, in only a few days however, these Hosannas would turn to Crucify Him!

C. (12) Jesus takes advantage of the large Passover crowd to present Himself as King.

1. Jesus had avoided situations that would hasten His death.
   But now He was forcing the Jewish leaders to act, for it was the Father’s will that Jesus die on Passover. Now, the hour had come!

D. (13) The palm branch was a symbol of triumph and victory in pre-Christian times.
   The Romans rewarded champions of the games and celebrated military successes with palm branches. Early Christians used the palm branch to symbolize the victory of the faithful over enemies of the soul, as in this Palm Sunday festival celebrating the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. In Judaism, the palm represents peace and plenty, and is one of the 4 Species for the Feast of Booths.
1. Why do you think that in the space of 1 short week Jesus could go from being the most popular person on the planet to public enemy #1?
   a) It’s easier to shout in a parade than stand at a cross! (www)
2. But actually, the statement that “the crowd that cried ‘Hosanna!’ on Palm Sunday ended up crying ‘Crucify Him!’ on Good Friday” is not true!
   a) It was primarily the Jerusalem Jews, influenced by the priests, who asked for His blood (Matt. 27:20).
   b) This multitude of enthusiastic lovers of Christ were principally from Galilee.

E. Hosanna - “Save” or “Save Now”. An expression of Praise!

F. The gospel of John emphasizes the royalty of Jesus. (Mt.21; Mrk.11; Lk.19)
   1. John is the only gospel that records that the people also shouted, “Blessed is the King of Israel!”

G. 3 GROUPS! (16-19)

H. (16) The disciples didn’t understand this was fulfilling prophecy, until after His death.

I. (19) The Pharisees can’t hardly believe their eyes. More & more people, hearing about the miracle of Lazarus, kept putting their faith in this Jesus, this local man who was causing so much trouble for them.

J. Religious jealousy is deplorable. It leads to murder, if not by cross, by the lips!
   1. It embitters the heart; separates & divides those who ought to love.

III. GRAIN OF WHEAT! (20-26)

A. ITS GREEK TO ME! (20-22)

B. Certain Greeks/Gentiles - God-fearing Gentiles who were probably not yet proselytes but still admired much of what they saw in Judaism & came regularly to the feasts.

C. At His birth, Gentiles came from the East; now at His death, Gentiles come once again.
   1. These men came to Philip, probably because of his Greek name. (Andrew also)

D. (21) I believe the coming/inquiring of these Greeks, put a smile on Jesus’ face.
   1. Why? Because their coming introduces the consummation of Jesus work.
   2. These Greeks were a token of the world of people beyond Israel who would be saved through Jesus’ atoning death & resurrection.
   3. And what had just taken place, on this very day(Lk.19:41), was that the King had been rejected by Israel. And Jesus wept over them, because they had not known the time of their visitation.
      a) The Jews said, “We want to see a sign!” The Gentiles said, “We want to see Jesus!”
E. (21,22) Unsure what to do Philip goes to Andrew together they bring the request to Jesus.
   1. **Interesting**..Andrew is only mentioned 3 **times** in the bible, **& each time** he is bringing **someone to Jesus!**  
      *What a soul-winner!*

F. **LETTING GO OF YOU!** (23-26)

G. (23) **Glorified** - i.e. In His death & Res.
   1. There was no other way to the glory, than Calvary & the grave!
   2. If His love for men was to **bear much fruit**, He must fall into the ground & die.
      a) **Death** is the only way to Savior-ship! **Death** is the necessary price of fruitfulness!¹

H. (24) Jesus sees Himself as a seed that would **die & produce fruit**.
   1. Jesus so masterful at using **observations from nature** to illustrate spiritual realities.
   2. Earlier, he used the illustration of the **sower sowing seeds**. Now, He talks about the seed itself. **It must** die first. **It must** loose its own identity. That the new plant may spring up.
      a) Thus, **death** is a condition of **life at its fullest!**
      b) Jesus understood that **His death** would bring **life** to **many people**.

I. Small Potatoes - A pastor/farmer was digging up a mess of potatoes in his garden. But he accidentally dug up a sermon as well. **On the 1st hill** of potatoes there was 7 beautiful, large potatoes. But when he plunged his fork under **the next plant** there was only 3 scrawny ones, as small as marbles. He saw the reason. For some reason or another the original **seed potato** had **failed to die**! It looked almost as it did 4 months earlier. It didn’t die & there was no fruit. **3 sermons came from these 3 small potatoes:**
   1. **A lesson about Jesus** - unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground & dies, it produces much grain. **Jesus** the grain of wheat that **died**, only to be resurrected in us as believers as His fruit.
   2. **A lesson for Sinners** - Until the sinner dies to his own **works** & to his own **efforts, merit, & righteousness**, he cannot know life & be saved.
   3. **A lesson for Believers** - We too have been “planted in the likeness of His death”(Rom.6:5). This established our position & salvation. But, to become fruitful we must **die to self**. We must put to death the **works of the flesh**(our old nature)

¹ ibid
J. (25) He who loves his old life/old nature/old ways (w/o Jesus) will lose it for/in eternity! He who hates his old life in this world, will keep it for eternal life!

1. It’s not saying, you can’t enjoy your stay here on planet earth!
   a) Solomon said, that every man should eat & drink & enjoy the good of all his labor - it is the gift of God! (Eccl.3:13)
   b) Look what Jesus just said in John 10:10b.

2. Examples of loving your life: my life when Brian was #1; my selfish life; my self-focused life; my life when I was in charge; it’s the art of keeping it all for me!

3. Examples of hating your life: death to the old Brian; not my will but His will be done; it’s the art of giving my all for others!

K. The Christian life is a paradox: to keep, we must give; to be great, we must serve; to live, we must die.

1. And not until we die will we realize the real joy of giving, or the emptiness of keeping.

L. But, how do I know if this is speaking to me? Here’s a test:

1. If your favorite subject is yourself, then it might be you! :-)
2. If a glazed look that comes over your eyes when the conversation wanders away from you.
3. God sends no one away empty, except those who are full of themselves. DL Moody
4. The trouble with some self-made men is that they worship their creator.

M. Discipleship means crucifying the ego & putting Christ & others first. H.G.Bosch

1. We’ve got a lot of people running around with seriously inflated egos who come crashing to earth all the time.

2. Ego is a person’s sense of self-esteem or self-importance. [Ego, Greek for “I”]

3. The smallest package in the world is a person wrapped up in himself.

4. I’ll say up front, I don’t think this is a very politically correct statement, but it’s a direct quote from an American Indian convert, who in broken English said, “Indian lay down blanket - Indian lay down pipe - Indian lay down tomahawk - Indian lay down Indian!” [That’s it!]

5. When I got saved, I laid down my sense of humor, because it was pretty crude, but He let me keep my sense of humor, just a cleaned up version. I laid down my rights, I was no longer my own, because He had bought me for a price; and now I’m to glorify Jesus in my body & spirit. (1Cor. 6:19,20) I laid down my future, because it was better trusting my future to One who sees the end from the beginning!
   a) The more we die to self, the more we live unto God!
N. (26) Service - All through life we must be prepared to **erect altars** on which to **sacrifice all that hinders** our **highest service** to others.

1. A **businessman** well known for his **ruthlessness** once announced to writer **Mark Twain**, “Before I die I mean to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I will climb Mount Sinai and **read** the 10 Commandments aloud at the top.” “I have a better idea,” replied Twain. “You could stay in Boston and **keep them**.”

2. The soul that dares to live in this way finds **streams** flowing from every smitten rock, and **honey** in the carcass of every slain lion. **Day** out of night, **spring** out of winter, **flowers** out of frost, **joy** out of sorrow, **fruitfulness** out of pruning, **Olivet** out of Gethsemane, **life** out of death. F.B.Meyer

O. I would sum up this section with 4 statements:

1. **Look the world has gone after** Him (19) - Have you?
2. **Sir, we wish to see** Jesus (21) - Do you?
3. **Do you hate** your **old life**? (25) - Or, still love it?
4. **If anyone serves** Me, let him **follow Me** (26)- Are you serving Him or self?
   a) When **Mother Teresa** was passing through a crowd in Detroit a woman remarked, 
      Her secret is that she is **free to be nothing**. **Therefore** God can use her for anything.

P. **Q**: What is your condition at this moment? Maybe you are a **believer** yet are still struggling with **bearing fruit** in your life. **Basically you’re still small potatoes**!

1. Ask the Lord, what you need to “lay down” this morning; what you need to “give up”; what you need to “crucify”!

Q. Maybe you’ve **never** made a profession for Christ. Maybe you’re like the **little potato seed**, covered up by life’s dirt, with arms folded, saying, “**I’m not gonna die!**”

1. I invite you to **come & die** this morning! That you might bust forth with a **life** full of **fruit**, a **life** filled with **abundance**, a **life worth living**, a **life that isn’t selfish**, a **life that matters**, a **life that seeks to make a difference** in this world, a **life committed** to Jesus Christ!