

Sermon Notes
January 3rd, 2021
Commissioning Sunday
What Now?

Welcome To Discovery Community Church!

We stand in what feels like a very important moment. Sometimes when you stand in important moments, there is some pressure to “do things right.” 2020 is over!! But then again, is it? What do we do now? What do we do to ACTUALLY leave 2020 behind?

We will be reading in John 12 today: this is the “January 2021” chapter of Jesus’ life and ministry. This is the transition chapter between the “building” and the “redeeming.” Jesus’ earthly ministry was growing and booming all the way through John 11, really climaxing with Lazarus, rising from the dead, but that moment also triggered the people in power to put stuff in place to end Jesus’ life.

Jesus knew it was time to transition. The steps ahead would be purposeful, strategic, and hard.

John 12:24-26 New International Version (NIV)

Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

As we all stand here “beyond 2020,” we are all standing in the tension between what was and what can be. And as exciting as that is, it is also difficult.

I don’t mean just the big systemic things like politics, COVID, and racial tension.

I mean, most of us are struggling with things far closer to home like financial strain or uncertainty, the emotional health of ourself or those close to us, like loss, or fragile marriages and homelife.

What Now?

How do you act in a transition, at least in such a way that helps move you forward?

Notice Jesus skipped the surface/pressing/immediate situation: “let’s not let someone else set our agenda.”

Reality (what is true)

We are all bound to universal laws, like the law of gravity. There is a law: an undeniable spiritual law. It is seen in biology, and certainly among the plant world.

Life is preceded by death

“Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed.”

Any life worth living, fruitful and powerful, always starts with death.

How it works in biology, the plant world is that right now everything in Tacoma looks like death. But underneath all that grey, all that muddy mess, and that death, life is beginning: a new season of fruit, beauty, and bounty.

We are typically so freaked out by death, and it’s first cousin “failure” that we run from it and don’t realize we are running from life. Specifically, the abundant life that God wants to give us.

An Invitation

“But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”

Jesus is inviting you and I to reduce the confusion, the chaos, the mixed motives, and die. He invites us to die in order to live.

Die to pleasing people, die to managing expectations, die to controlling people, die to our plan, our wants, our needs, die to our fears of failure, of grief, and of loss, and simply follow Him.

As Jesus stood in the middle of John 12, He had some decisions to make. He made the decision to turn away from what was expedient and comfortable, and Jesus turned His focus on the cross and boldly invited us to do the same.

What does that look like?

1. This invitation is for a decision to follow Christ

First, we die to ourselves to live for Christ. Let's make no mistake here: this is Jesus is calling, and has called all of us to follow Him fully.

Not add a little bit of good Christian living, you know better choices. Being a Jesus follower always requires us following Jesus with a death: ours. Jesus is inviting you and I to lay everything down: the good and the bad of 2020 and to completely follow Him.

2 Corinthians 5:15 New International Version (NIV)

And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

Galatians 2:20 New International Version (NIV)

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

2. This invitation is for a new life of Service

John 12:26 New International Version (NIV)

Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

This invitation is a decision, but this decision is marked daily with intention.

Mark 10:45 New International Version (NIV)

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

The facts are for the last 2000 years, in every pandemic or crisis, the church and Jesus' people have shown up. The secular world and the atheists can try to distort history all they want, but the truth is that Jesus' people serve selflessly.

When babies were left to die on steps, Jesus people started orphanages. When people were ravaged with pandemics, Jesus people started hospitals. Jesus people have started schools, fostered children, freed slaves, worked for justice, sheltered the homeless.

This call to die is far more than a call to make a one time spiritual decision: it's a call to selflessly serve, every day, often in small and seemingly insignificant ways, among insignificant people.

And this kind of death, a daily one, is always followed by life.

3. This is an invitation for nearness

John 12:26 New International Version (NIV)

Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

John 17:3 New International Version (NIV)

Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

John 14:5-7 New International Version (NIV)

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

I don't know three things that are more important to the church as a whole, for you, and honestly for our world than: the supremacy of Jesus, living in love, and walking close.