

The Gospel of John
Lesson 16 – Chapter 12
Foreshadowing

This is a chapter that offers foreshadowing of a number of significant events that will shape the church and through the church the followers of Jesus. These foreshadowing stories mark the transition from The Book of Signs (Jesus' public ministry) to the Book of Glory (Jesus in the upper room, death, resurrection).

Foreshadowing Jesus' death (vs.1-9): The imagery of this opening sequence sets the tone for what lies ahead. First it begins at Passover, the historical event in which the shedding of lamb's blood saved and freed the people. Jesus is celebrated by his friends (his sheep who believe). He is anointed by Mary with nard, which was often used to anoint the dead before burial. Judas is introduced as the dishonest and greedy disciple who will betray Jesus for a fee. Jesus affirms Mary's actions by intimating that he is already as good as dead...and there will be plenty of time for the church to care for the poor in the future. This leads to another reference to the chief priests planning on killing Jesus because many Jews were following him and not them.

Foreshadowing Jesus as the coming true King (vs.10-16): When Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem the crowds treat him like a king coming into his capitol city. There is a donkey (king of peace). There are palm branches. Shouts of Hosannah and blessed is the King of Israel. The disciples are clueless as to the meaning of this outpouring, but it will be made clear to them after Jesus is glorified (crucified and risen).

Foreshadowing the expansion of the church (vs.17-33): This section begins with people spreading the word about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead (meaning Jesus is the one who gives eternal life). People go to meet Jesus and the Pharisees lament that "the whole world has gone after him." Suddenly there are Greeks present at the festival who want to meet Jesus. Phillip and Andrew tell Jesus. It is at that moment that Jesus knows it is time for him to be glorified because the word has spread from Galilee to Samaria, to the Greco-Roman world (his death, like a seed, will, produce many other seeds). However, his followers (the other seeds) must be willing to follow him to their deaths if need be. Jesus then makes a conscious decision to complete his mission. This decision is verified by a voice from heaven. Jesus then pronounces that judgment has come and that when he is lifted up (cross and ascension) all people will be drawn to him.

Foreshadowing darkness and fear (vs.34-46): This section begins with the crowd once again failing to see who Jesus is or what he is to accomplish. They return to Moses as their guide. Jesus refers to himself as the light (the one who shows the path to the Father) who will only be present for a short time and then darkness will overtake the people. This darkness is a type of spiritual blindness (can't see with eyes or hearts). This is a reference to Isaiah's call in which God says the peoples' eyes will be "shut" so that they cannot "see" what God is doing. Though some believe, they are afraid to say so...which mirrors the contemporary experience of the Johannine community. The conclusion of this section is that if one truly sees Jesus then one sees God, and lives in the light and not in the darkness.

Foreshadowing Judgment and eternal life (vs.46-50): Jesus tells the people that there will be a judgment, but that it is God, and not him, who judges. Jesus came to save the world (echoing Chapter 3). The judgment will be based solely on the response people have to the words that Jesus has spoken about himself, that are simply reflections of God's words, which are intended to lead to eternal life.

Questions:

1. How do understand the metaphor of Jesus as king?
2. What does it mean to you to follow Jesus?
3. How does seeing Jesus help you see God?