

Weekly Bible Study group – November 4, 2009

This week's reading assignment: John 12-15
Reflection by Bob Zurinsky (bob@spu.edu)

This week's passage is a crucial turning-point in the gospel. What we've seen up to this point is the ever-growing excitement and expectation surrounding Jesus. He comes on the scene and John the Baptist declares that he is the messiah, the king/leader that the people have been expecting. That's big right there. But then in his miracles he steps up the expectation, showing that he's no ordinary messiah – he's got real power; real authority. The people know that something is up. Then he blows their minds, making statements about how he's not just a king, but he's GOD. He raises a man from the dead. The excitement is reaching a frenzy as he begins to move toward Jerusalem. His followers now expected him to enter into the capital city in royal triumph, and take his place as the leader of the nation. This was a revolution that was underway.

And then it happens. In John 12, Jesus arrives at the gates of the capital. The people know what this means. The government is about to be overthrown, and they've all gathered there to witness it and to take part in the overthrow. People are ecstatic as he enters the gates. "Hosanna! Blessed be the king who comes in the name of the LORD!" The climax of the story is right now. It's all been leading up to this. And then the unthinkable happens.

Immediately after entering the gates of the city, at the moment when the revolution was supposed to take place, Jesus says these words: **"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit... whoever serves me must follow me."** What?!

At the moment when the people expect power, Jesus reveals what his kingdom is actually made of. And it turns out to be opposite of the world's idea of kingdom and power and glory. (This is why we sometimes call it the "upside-down kingdom.")

Service. Humility. Suffering. Forgiving. Dying. Loving. Loving. Loving.

It looks like weakness. It looks like failing. It looks like moving down instead of up. But God has said it and has asked us to trust – that this is, in fact, the only kingdom that will last.