

John 12:20-33

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say--' Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.

Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."

Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine.

Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Sermon: Carol-Ann Chapman

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Today is the last Sunday in lent before Holy Week. Next Sunday is Palm Sunday the week that takes us to the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, to the death on the cross and finally to the day of resurrection on Easter Sunday. On this Sunday we are brought to an announcement that takes place during this transformative week.

The passage begins with a group of people, identified as “some Greeks” who want to see Jesus. Now since they are in Jerusalem for the Passover Festival, likely they are Greek speaking Jews, but we really don’t know. Some scholars speculate that these Greeks may also be Gentiles, and as we know from the video last week, the word Gentile, can also mean, peoples or nations. Like many words and statements in the Bible, there is a purpose for using them that can go beyond face value. The book of John is known for its complex theology and use of words for multiple meanings, so it also could be that the Greeks in this passage represent something larger than a group of Greek speaking Jews, in fact these “Greeks” may symbolize the people, all the people, the nations who Jesus has come to redeem.

We know that Simon and Peter come to Jesus to let him know that this group of people want to speak with him, and Jesus’ immediate response is “The Hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” Did this group coming to speak to Jesus signify that the world was ready for what was to come? That now the nation’s people, not just the Jews were ready to see Jesus, the world was ready for Jesus’ death and resurrection. The Greeks said to Philip...”We want to see

Jesus.” Perhaps Jesus in his response was saying...Now that the world is ready, you will see me....you will see the one who was sent by God...the Son of Man...soon you will see me in all my Glory.

Jesus says the “Hour has come.” These words are similar to those used in Old Testament texts, (Amos 5:18-20, Joel 1:5) where the “day would come” the day, the hour when God would intervene...Jesus was not just saying that it was his time...but it was God’s time, God’s hour. And as if to solidify this thought, a voice comes out of the clouds, “I have glorified (your name) and I will glorify it again.” (V28) God is present...Jesus the man is not alone, and he is pointing to his reality, one where God’s plan is coming to fruition, and the time has arrived for Jesus grand exit.

This is the beginning of the end of Jesus time on earth, and this his last public encounter. And in true Jesus form he uses symbolic language to teach and prepare those who are listening for what is to come.

And in this encounter we see the vulnerable side of Jesus, the human side of Jesus, for his soul is troubled. (v27) Jesus is aware that his human death is near and that feels troublesome to him. For us there can be something comforting about this idea. The idea that Jesus, the Son of God, the Son of Man...the Messiah...was feeling distress. Because each one of us faces our own mortality at some time or another and no matter how strong or deep one’s faith is, I believe that most...if not all of us, feel troubled... have a fear of letting go of this life...because even with the hope of Jesus Christ there is an element of the unknown.

A few years ago, I went zip lining for the first time. I was strapped into the harness and the expert coached me how to sit and lean, and what to do when I got to the end so that I had a smooth stop. I anticipated that it would be an amazing experience, yet along with it there was an element of fear. The idea of flying over trees and nature speeding with the wind in my face, as I was able see things from the perspective of a bird, was an exhilarating thought, but at the same time the unknown was frightening. I anticipated that I would never be the same, yet what exactly would that mean?

I imagine as Jesus prepared for his death, as his soul was troubled, he was feeling this paradox between fear and anticipation...he was about to embark on what would be the most amazing journey, one that would not only reunite him with God the creator, and would open that same door to all of the world, Greeks and others, but as a human he had to face the greatest unknown, death. Death...the thing that each human instinctually fights to avoid. We live for survival, and yet death is a reality we all need to face, and in that sense Jesus wasn't any different than any one of us. Like everyone, death is not something I can avoid either, and the older I get the closer I know it is coming. And although it is not something I think about all of the time, like everyone I have moments where I am faced with my own mortality...but as a Christian I have been given something that comforts me and that is the hope of Jesus Christ...the hope of everlasting life.

As I was lifted up on the zip-line and suddenly I was let go, it was if I was flying. It was the most exhilarating experience of my life. All the fear and trepidation disappeared and I lived in the moment. It was an experience that I

couldn't have even imagined. I cannot tell you what life after death will look like, but I can only imagine that a spiritual experience with a God who loves humanity absolutely will be something that in our humanness we don't even have the language to even explain. I imagine that the most exhilarating earthly experience will pale in comparison to the joy that will be experienced in God's presence.

As Jesus prepares himself for what is to come, he prepares the crowd. Jesus begins with "I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." (v 24) Jesus is telling them, that the only way his life can have meaning, is through his death and with this death much more will be offered. And for those who follow in the footsteps of Jesus, who become his servants, God will honour them. As we honour Jesus in this way...God honours us.

And finally in his last public conversation Jesus tells the group who is listening, "when I am lifted up from the earth, (I) will draw all people to myself." (v32) Jesus says I will draw **all** people. The hour came for Jesus and it came when it wasn't only some of the Jews who were believing in him, but when the Greeks, the Nations, all the people began to wonder about this Jesus; all of the people who Jesus came to reconcile with God. Later that week, Jesus was lifted onto the cross, facing his human fear, yet prepared to let go of his human life for the purpose of reconciling God with humanity. Jesus lifted up in resurrection where all people will be drawn to him...and in this each one of us...all God's people have hope in everlasting life. Thanks be to God. Amen.