

# The **HOUR** has Come

John 12:20-33

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The Super Bowl. The state championship. The Final Four. The time that all athletes dream of! To come out on top. To be number one. Fame and fortune. The hour of glory!

The Greeks were eager to see Jesus. It happened at the start of Passover week in Jerusalem. Some Greeks had come to Jerusalem for the Passover feast. We don't know anything about them. Perhaps they were simply curious. Seekers. Foreign journalists out to get a story. Or more likely, they were the so-called "God-fearers," worshipers of YHWH, but from a distance. Permanent *guests* at the synagogue and outside observers at the Temple.

They go to Phillip. "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Very likely they were there for the Great Palm Celebration of Jesus' arrival to the city. And like so many, they heard the latest about the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Jerusalem must have been buzzing with the news. Phillip tells Andrew, Peter's brother, and together they go to Jesus.

What did the average Jew think of the average Gentile? Not much. From their perspective, the Greeks were the "other part" of the human race. The Gentiles. The uncircumcised *outsiders*. Jesus uses the opportunity to point to His impending death and its universality. A death for *everyone*, no matter who you are. (William Cwirla)

*The wine has run out. Jesus do something. Show yourself. Show them what you can do. Reveal yourself! "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come."*

*Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave Galilee and go to Judea ... show yourself to the world!" Jesus told them, "You go to the festival. I am not going ... for my time has not yet fully come."*

*Then they tried to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him, because His hour had not yet come.*

Throughout the Gospel of John, we await this hour. Everyone is looking for Jesus' hour of grandeur, His final four appearance, when He would at *last* throw off his humble humanity, and begin to act like the Messiah everyone was looking for! The Greeks were eager to see Jesus. "Sir", they said to Philip, "we wish to see Jesus." *And Jesus answers them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."*

"Yes! Finally! We've been waiting for this!" What earthly glorious pictures those words must have called up in the minds of the disciples. They were flushed with the glory of the palms and hosannas of Palm Sunday. This, they thought, was the real Jesus, the royal Jesus. This was Jesus coming into His own. The kingdom was about to be established. The Greeks were rallying to Christ's cause. The crowd had acclaimed Him king. And now, from His own lips, the words, "*The hour has come, that the Son of Man should be glorified*". (Norman Nagel)

But when *Jesus* speaks of *His* hour of glory, He's got something *else* in mind. As Moses had lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness, so must Jesus be lifted up for the life of the world. They all *knew* what *lifted up* meant. "*And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.*" He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. So the crowd answered him, "*We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up?*"

Glory in death. Who finds glory in death? What Jesus came to do, He likens to a seed of grain. That seed remains but a seed. Until what? Until it's buried in the ground. Until it dies. And then, once it's dead and buried, and only then, it's *true* glory is revealed. It bears much fruit!

Some of you are thinking about spring and you've already ordered your seeds. And when they arrive in the mail, when you finally get them, it's a glorious day! But their *true* glory doesn't come until planting season begins, until you bury them in the soil. Then the magic begins! Then, their glory is revealed!

Jesus won't bear the fruit of His mission from God unless He first dies. Unless He's buried in the ground. Jesus remains but a seed until He dies. And then, and only then, His glory is revealed. All His words, all His healings, all His miraculous signs, have no eternal benefit, without the cross.

Fame. Fortune. Wealth. Power. Earthly glory! "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." In the glory of that great Palm Sunday, Jesus' heart is heavy. Weighed down. A heart preoccupied with what's soon to come. *"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 ground and dies, it will remain a single seed. But if it dies, it will produce many grains of wheat."*

For us, death means what? It's all over. For Jesus, it's the moment of glory, for that's when His purpose is realized. Dying, He brings life to us who live in the shadow of death! And this same *dying glory* applies to us. If we try holding on to our life as we know it, if we're trying to always stay in charge of our life, of directing how everything goes, that it would go *our* way, we never arrive at *real* living, real life. And in the end, we lose it all.

How we *love* to hold on! Hold on to our lives. Hold on to our possessions. Hold on to our pride. Hold on to our pain. Hold on to our anger. Hold on to our grudges. Hold on to what's familiar, what's comfortable. Why are we so easily offended when we're slighted by others? Why are we so easily offended by the slightest word and easily take offense?

We're desperately trying to hold on. Hold on to ourselves. Our image. Our life. God's at work in us every day - killing us little by little. Killing us more and more. And bringing us the life of Christ. Dying, that we may live! As one person put, "If you want to know how much of the old self you still have in you, consider how much you're offended by others. The longer we've walked with Jesus, the less offended we should be by others, because the less of us there is to offend."

The more we learn to let go - let *go* of our life - the more we stop making sure everything goes as we think it should, as *we'd* like it to go, the more we let go and give ourselves over to God and trust Him with our lives, the more we start truly living. *Eternally* living!

*The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.*

All the Greeks wanted to do was to see Jesus. But Jesus is preoccupied with his death. To see Jesus is to see the importance of dying - in order to really live. We don't die as a substitute for others, as Jesus did. But in believing in Him as our Substitute, following Him, our Lord, we die *with* Him, and live *with* Him. He becomes our life. What did Paul say? "To live, is, Christ. To die, is gain!"

Everyone was looking forward to Jesus' glory, but not as *they* saw glory. We too, are looking for glory. Glory in our lives. What does that mean for us? What does that *look* like? All our problems go away and everything goes our way. Isn't that pretty much the glory we're looking for? Isn't that what we want?

But maybe there's *another* glory we should be looking for. The glory of Jesus. Heavenly glory. The glory of dying. Dying to self. And living - that *Another* would be glorified. Glorified *in* us. Glorified *through* us. The Greeks want to see Jesus. And Jesus turns the attention from Him to the Father. *"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name."*

Jesus came to Jerusalem to die. As true man, He's deeply troubled by what He's facing. The triumphant procession doesn't change the reality He knows is coming. He already feels the burden associated with Gethsemane. His sufferings would be intense beyond measure - because of our sin.

Still, the God-man never wavers from His assigned path. He doesn't cry out in human frailty for the Father to save Him from His ordeal. He came from heaven for this very purpose; prepared for this time. To bring glory to the Father. *"But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name."*

*Then a voice came from heaven. We've heard that voice before. At Jesus' baptism. At His transfiguration. Then a voice came from heaven. "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine."*

Why for *their* sake? The crowd needed to hear God's voice as a sign that a truly cosmic event was being set in motion - the *confrontation* God had promised in Eden between the serpent and a Son of Eve. *"Now is the*

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

What happened in the garden? Mankind was drawn to satan and away from God. When Jesus dies on the cross, satan is cast out, as the Seed of the woman emerges as the Risen Victor, and people are drawn to Jesus. Away from satan and back to God.

*"Now is the judgment of this world ...." This judgment is an ongoing process, as we, either in faith accept, or in unbelief reject Jesus as our Savior. So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light."*

*The hour has come, for the Son of Man to be glorified.* Jesus goes the way of death and the grave - like a grain of wheat cast to the ground. He will lose His life for what purpose? In order to take it up again three days later. And in this great planting, in His dying and rising, what will happen? He will bear much fruit. The salvation of many throughout the ages, including your own!

The championship game. To come out on top. To be number one. Fame and fortune. The hour of glory! But the glory of Jesus, is unimaginably greater, than any such earthly death-bound glory. Jesus knows how earthbound we are, how our hearts and hopes, are imprisoned in the momentary, earthly things of food, drink, clothing, money, vanity. He would free us from deathly slavery to these things, lift us above them, so we see their *proper* value and purpose. He would free us from the death that is in the worship of *created* things, so we may have the life that is alone *with Him*.

"Glory" and "death". Two words that don't ordinarily go together. Unless you're talking about Jesus. Unless you're talking about those who would follow Him. This "glory", this passing through death, to life with Christ, is not something that happens *once* in the Christian's life. *Daily*, we pass through death to life with Christ. As the Apostle Paul said, "I die daily." Every day is soil in which to plant the seed that is *yourself*. To die to self. Die with Christ. And rise with Christ! (Nagel)

*"The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. ... While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light."*

Jesus in all His glory! That's what the people wanted to see. Wouldn't you like to see the same thing? Then *where* should you look? Look to the cross. There, you will find the *real* Jesus. *Real* glory. As John writes " *... and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth!*" Glory like no other. Heavenly glory. Divine glory. Eternal glory. Jesus, for you. Glorified with Him.

*"The hour has come, for the Son of Man to be glorified ... and bear much fruit!"* As the hymn writer wrote, *"In the cross, in the cross, be my glory ever, till my ransomed soul shall find rest beyond the river."*