

DEVOTIONAL 7



CHRIST
CHURCH

JOHN 12:20-26

²⁰ Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. ²¹ So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” ²² Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³ And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ 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.

DAY 1

JOHN 12:19-21

¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.” ²⁰ Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. ²¹ So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

Just prior to this passage is the story of the triumphal entry. People celebrated the coming of Jesus into Jerusalem as the king of Israel. The people were attracted to Jesus because of the miraculous signs that he performed, in particular the resurrection of Lazarus. The Pharisees, who had planned to kill both Lazarus and Jesus, recognized that they couldn't overcome the wave of popularity. In verse 19, we read that the Pharisees see that “the world has gone after him.” John uses this sentence to transition to the next story.

In verse 20, we see an instance of the world going after Jesus as the Greeks at the feast seek to see Jesus. This is a reminder that Jesus did not come merely to redeem Israel but to save the world. As John's gospel previously proclaimed,

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” John 3:16-17

Throughout the Gospels we see this fulfilled as those outside of Israel are drawn to Jesus and believe him. We've already seen examples of this in John 4 as the Samaritan woman and the official whose son was dying both believe in Jesus. The hope that Jesus offers is not just for Israel but for all people.

PRAYER

Lord of light, thank you for revealing your light to the whole world. Help me to reflect your light to the world through my words and deeds

DAY 2

JOHN 12:21-22

²¹ So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” ²² Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

Evangelism is a loaded word. It may conjure up images of a tent revival or hard-sell tactics meant to convict sinners to repent. Maybe some yelling or manipulation. There may have been a time when you wondered how God might be calling you to speak to “those sinners.”

And then one day you realized that you were a sinner too.

Scripture is thankfully filled with examples of real people that God used to further his kingdom in spite of their shortcomings. Andrew and Philip were real people who messed up too. They may have disrespected their parents or doubted or lied or held a grudge. Maybe they got up that morning wondering why they had to get up so early. But they showed up. Jesus drew Andrew and Philip to him and allowed them to know him. They were just beginning to understand who he was but didn’t always understand his mission.

They were *with* Jesus. Then, when someone had questions, they took that person to Jesus. They didn’t have it all figured out yet but they knew who did.

Andrew...

One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. (John 1:40-42)

Philip...

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” (John 1:43-46)

Jesus draws us in and allows us to know him. As we understand the sinners we are and the Savior he is, he invites us to participate in his kingdom. HE is faithful and will put Peters, Nathaniels, and Greeks in our paths as we seek him.

Come and see this one who knows.

PRAYER

Father, put people in front of us who need to hear the gospel. Give us less of an awareness of when and how we should act and more of an awareness of when and how you are acting: arranging interactions and making openings for conversations. Give us the words to say and the ears to listen when we realize you are giving us an opportunity to interact with someone who is searching. Thank you for opening our eyes to who you are! Use us to share your love with others. In the name of the one who knows us, Jesus! Amen.

DAY 3

JOHN 12:23-24

²³ And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ 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.

From the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus clearly and repeatedly said he was not here on his own authority or mission. He often told his listeners he had been sent from God into this world so that men and women could know his Father and the eternal life he wanted to give. Jesus came to reclaim sons and daughters from every tribe and nation. This was his mission.

Jesus came as a witness; he spoke only what he heard from above. He had no interest in being clever or original, but spoke as his Father directed (John 5:19; 7:15, 82). Similarly, His acts were chosen by God as signs pointing to who he was. Jesus refused Satan’s invitation in the wilderness to be relevant, spectacular, powerful . . . traps to bring him under Satan’s authority.

From eternity, God had planned the exact moments for Jesus’s birth, childhood, and ministry. He came “in the fullness of time,” when everything necessary had been accomplished. Jesus knew he was on God’s time-line. Many times He refused what appeared to be an opportunity, saying his hour had not yet come. But now, following the triumphal entry and seeking Greeks, he says, “The hour has come.” What hour? The hour when the Son of Man would be glorified, the hour for which His entire ministry had prepared, the hour his mission would be accomplished.

Why does Jesus call himself “the Son of Man”? Jesus used this designation many times during his ministry, identifying himself with the prophecies of Ezekiel and Daniel who looked forward to the Messiah, a God/man, a second Adam, a King. The Son of Man walked among us, experiencing the limitations, temptations, joys, and sorrows of humanity, yet with authority over nature, law, disease, demons, and death. All this revealed his glory. But now, in this hour, a fuller glory would be revealed.

Jesus knows no one will understand what is about to happen. So he asks them to listen carefully. He says, “Truly, truly, I say to you.” He uses an illustration from agriculture to help all of us see. “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”

All gardeners know that the purpose of a seed is to produce a harvest of some kind--grain, fruit, vegetables. And all gardeners know this will require putting the seed into the soil. There is *life* in the seed! But how will it be released? Going into the dark, wet ground will break down the outer husk so that the life inside can be released to produce a harvest. If a seed had a voice, it might protest, protecting the safe, comfortable existence inside the package, happy to be a good seed. But no gardener would listen to that.

Jesus had perfectly obeyed his Father while on earth. But if he had stopped there, God's purpose to bring "many sons to glory" (Heb. 2:10) could not be accomplished. Jesus had to be the seed that went into the ground as the second Adam, releasing his life for all who would trust in him. When In anguish of soul he offered himself in our place, he saw his offspring and was satisfied (Isa. 53). His perfect love and obedience is indeed glorious!

In this Lenten season, reflect on Isaiah's prophecy of our Savior's unrivaled glory, revealed in chapter 53.

PRAYER

*Man of Sorrows, what a name, for the Son of God who came to reclaim us ruined sinners.
Hallelujah! What a Savior! Amen*

DAY 4

JOHN 12:25-26

²⁵ Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ 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.

We have been talking this week about Jesus's mission--to lay down his life for the sake of the world. It is in the willing sowing of his life that a harvest for reaping is prepared. As we have noted, this is such an inside out, upside down view of the world, especially as it compares to Western societal thinking, which places emphasis on success and power.

However, there is an important distinction to observe. Jesus was not stating that the only way he could be exalted was through his humiliation. In other words, he was thinking about more than the consequences of his actions. What Jesus actually claims, both for him and for us, is that glory lies in the pain, the suffering, and the death. For Jesus, the cross is the moment in which the Son of Man is lifted up!

What is the significance of this distinction? For starters, it calls us to examine our culture's assessment of success/suffering. While there are differences that lie behind suffering (for example, we can suffer because of bad choices or on account of disease, which is no one's fault), this distinction helps us to recognize that certain types of suffering are glorious. Second, we see here that obedience to the will of God is the distinguishing factor that qualifies the suffering we undergo as glorious. In his death on the cross, Jesus was obeying the Father and glorifying the Father, and so all who obey the Father and give glory to the Father are honored by the Father. This then is affirmed to the disciples by the promise that all who serve him, "the Father will honor." These are deep truths and not always easy to get our heads around, but there is both comfort and challenge here for us as we follow Jesus.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for the willing laying down of your life in obedience to the will and plan of the Father. We thank you that you walked this path and so gave us life! We thank you too for the realization that this path is not simply a means to an end, but in his path glory itself is displayed. Help us in our own suffering to embrace it with faith knowing that you are sovereign. Give us hope that perseveres to the end and love for you, the Savior of our souls. We thank you for your promise that you will never leave us or forsake us. Give us courage and wisdom today to serve you. We pray in your name. Amen.

DAY 5

JOHN 12:25-26

²⁵ Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ 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.

We all have a survival instinct, we want to hold on to the life we hold dear. On the one hand, that is completely natural and life is to be counted as precious, a gift from God. On the other hand, we are reminded today that even our very life is not the highest value in our world, that would belong to following Jesus.

In the previous verses, Jesus has stated that he will lay down his life like a kernel of wheat falling to the ground and dying. This is to be the pattern for our life. We are invited to die to self and therefore acknowledge God as sovereign; to think otherwise nurtures an idolatrous focus on self that will be the root of all kinds of disastrous life weeds. The contrast noted here between loving life and hating it is not an absolute form of hate, but rather it is articulating a fundamental preference. Positively put, we are to fundamentally prefer following Jesus to anything in this world.

So what does this look like in our lives? It really could look like a lot of different things. An easy example would be something like the love of money. If we nurture that love and don't die to it, how many people will we hurt on our way to the top? What will we fail to enjoy along the way? Jesus reminds us binarily that we cannot serve God and money (Matt. 6:24). But there are so many other, more subtle things that we can slip into serving. We can slip into serving success, comfort, worry, relationships. We can become slaves to externally doing good or being nice.

But Jesus calls us to be where he is. And this is really the good news. For all our bumbling about, for all our starts and stops and getting it wrong, Jesus still invites us to come and be with him: Where I am, there will my servant be also. This is truly life.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we don't want to be anywhere except where you are. Today we are reminded that being with you is an invitation to fundamentally love you over the things of this world that we can so easily slip into loving. Thank you for reminding us that having you as the pinnacle of life is truly life, even when the world belittles it or when it feels like death. Spirit, thank you for being our guide in this journey; show us how to follow. And thank you in advance for always being there to pick us up when we fall. We pray this in Jesus's name. Amen.