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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
March 21, 2021
5th Sunday in Lent

Scripture Lesson: Hebrews 5:7-9

Passion Reading: Jesus scourged and Condemned

Hymns: 149; 171:1,2,5,9; 163:1,4,6,9 173:1

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: John 12:20-33

²⁰ Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. ²¹ Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

²² Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

²³ But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. ²⁴ Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. ²⁵ He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

²⁷ "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.

²⁸ Father, glorify Your name."

Then a voice came from heaven, *saying*, "I have both glorified *it* and will glorify *it* again."

²⁹ Therefore the people who stood by and heard *it* said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him."

³⁰ Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now

the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³² And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself.” ³³ This He said, signifying by what death He would die.” (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Crucified Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Signs of the Times

When we look at the evil in this world, and all the wars and violence and persecution against the Kingdom of God and the spread of the gospel, we think of these things as signs of the times. We are reminded by events in the world that this world is passing away and that we should be looking for “*the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.*” (Titus 2:13)

There were signs of the times for Jesus to note as well, leading up to His sufferings and death on the cross. Sometimes these signs set things in motion. Take for example the dinner in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper. Mary of Bethany entered the dining room and anointed Jesus’ feet with a precious ointment. Jesus said that this was done for His death and burial, and that the disciples were wrong to be critical of this act of devotion. However, this also triggered Judas, who approached Jesus’ enemies, offering to hand Jesus over to them for a sum of money.

It was the following day, Tuesday of Holy Week, that Jesus was in the temple courts in Jerusalem, publicly teaching the Jewish people for the last time before His sufferings, when the events of our text took place. Jesus saw these events as a sign of the times that His death was approaching. --

THEME: Gentiles Coming to See Jesus Signaled:

**I. It Was Time for Jesus’ Mission of Redemption
to be Completed.**

Sometimes we miss the significance of events. In fact, at times things seem rather random to us when in fact they are related and we simply fail to see the connections. So it is with the events of our text. It was Tuesday of Passover week and there were great crowds of people gathered in Jerusalem, not only from Judea and Galilee, but also many pilgrims from distant countries, and some of them were Gentiles who had come to faith in the God of the Jews, and so had also traveled to Jerusalem to worship God. So it was that some Greek men came and approached Philip, a disciple of Jesus who had a Greek name, and expressed to Philip their desire to see Jesus. Jesus was inside the temple courts where Gentiles, including those who had converted, were not allowed to go. Philip grabbed Andrew and the two of them went in to tell Jesus about these Greeks requesting to see Jesus.

Our text reports Jesus' powerful reaction to what appears to be a simple request. It may be difficult for us, living in such a distant time and distant culture, to grasp where this response came from. Jesus sees in this simple request a sign that it was time for things leading up to His death to be set in motion. *“Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. ²⁴Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.” (v.23-24)*

First, we note that Jesus speaks of the Son of Man being glorified. Jesus used this title for Himself as the Promised Savior. Would His audience have connected the dots and thought, “Oh, Jesus is speaking of His death?” Not likely; they weren't able to grasp what all these things were leading up to. The disciples didn't grasp it any better than the rest of the crowd gathered to hear Jesus. They were resisting the truth that it was necessary for the Christ to die, and then the third day rise again.

Jesus would be glorified by the fulfillment of His mission of redemption. He couldn't save the world unless He faced the suffering that lay before Him, including the agony of the cross, and His death and burial. The Greeks asking to see Jesus, marked for Jesus the beginning of the next phase of God's plan for salvation, the salvation of the **world**. Up to this point in history God was directing things in the world for the fulness of time when He sent

forth His Son to live under the law, and to redeem those who were under the law.(Galatians 4:4) Now, that time had come, and that message of the gospel was to go out, not only to the Jews, but to the gentile world as well.

These Greek men that desired to Jesus marked the beginning of that next phase of God's plan. For that next phase to be initiated it was necessary for Jesus to suffer, die and be buried. The parable or illustration of the seed needing to be planted in the ground was Jesus addressing His own death, and how His death and "planting" in the grave would cause an increase of many believers. But first the mission of salvation had to be fulfilled.

Jesus would be glorified by His sufferings and death on the cross. When we say this out loud we have difficulty fathoming this truth. But when we consider why it is that we observe the season of Lent, and the time we spend meditating on all that Jesus endured for us and our salvation, and how we praise and glorify His name for all He accomplished on our behalf through His sufferings and death, then we get it. Yes, in our hearts, filled with faith and love for our Savior, Jesus is indeed glorified in His death and burial.

However, these words of our Lord were hardly spoken lightly or with eager anticipation. Jesus knew what lay before Him: the depth of humiliation, and the intensity of suffering, and the burden of guilt, and the curse of sin. He knew, and at that moment it all swept over Him. And so, Jesus said: "*Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.* ²⁸ *Father, glorify Your name.*" (v. 27-28)

These words let us know that what we know of Jesus' sufferings in Gethsemane didn't just begin when Jesus and His disciples arrived in that garden a couple of days later. That burden already lay heavily upon Jesus' heart, upon His consciousness. Already we hear the prayer from Jesus that we associate with Gethsemane, if it is possible, take this cup from Me! But Jesus came to redeem a fallen world. That was His purpose, and He accepted that purpose as it was given to Him by God the Father. Jesus expressed that so powerfully with the prayer, "*Father glorify Your name!*" (v.28)

May we all understand the weight that lay upon Jesus' heart those days leading up to His crucifixion! At the same time may we also comprehend the dedication to the cause of our salvation and the depth of love Jesus held for lost sinners; "*While we were still sinners, Christ **died** for us.*" (Romans 5:8)

Now we hear of one of the most remarkable events of Holy Week that we rarely mention, and it happened right there while all these people were gathered together in the temple. "*Then a voice came from heaven, saying, 'I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.'*"²⁹ *Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to Him.'*³⁰ *Jesus answered and said, 'This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.'*" (v.28-30)

There was a voice from heaven. Some couldn't believe their ears. They wanted to explain it away as thunder, but it was a voice, the voice of God the Father. The Father's name would be glorified just as it has been in the past. We use the expression, "To God all praise and glory." We see God's hand in history. He directs things according to His will **for the advancement of His kingdom**. He brings judgment when He will and grace upon others when He will. So it was that the Father would again glorify His name by delivering this sinful world from sin and death through the death of His own Son.

The voice came in response to Jesus' prayer, but not for Jesus' benefit. It came when it did, at the temple, in the midst of Passover, for the benefit of the people of the Jews. *Christ is our Passover!* He is the fulfillment of all the words and promises of God, the fulfillment of all the symbols and types laid out for the people in the Old Testament. Now God the Father proclaims the glory of salvation that He brings this world in His Son that they might know and believe that Jesus is the Christ.

The evil of this world has met its match. The Old Evil Foe shall be defeated and cast out.

With the Word of the prophets fulfilled in Jesus' Passion --

II. It Was Time for the Gospel to Go Out to the World.

Jesus speaks of His death and the manner of His death, and how that will serve the will of God for the advancement of the gospel in the world. Jesus said, “*And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.*” *This He said, signifying by what death He would die.*” (v. 32-33) The Holy Spirit tells us that Jesus is referring to be lifted up on the cross. For Jesus to say that the people of the world will be attracted to Him because He was lifted up on the cross sounds ludicrous, but of course that is exactly what Jesus meant, and that is indeed what has happened.

The Apostle Paul writes by inspiration, “*The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*” (1 Corinthians 1:18) God uses the message of the cross to call sinners to faith in Jesus for forgiveness and life and eternal salvation. Believers in Christ are not ashamed of the cross. We regard it as precious. We look to the empty cross as reminder that Jesus died there for our sins, **once for all**. We have crosses in our homes, we wear crosses close to our hearts, all because we regard the message of the cross as a special gift of God’s grace.

I would like to call your attention to the passage on the bulletin cover this morning. It reads, “*All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord.*” (Psalm 22:27) Please note that it is from Psalm 22, the psalm that begins with Jesus’ word from the cross, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” (Psalm 22:1) and goes on to relate to us not only the physical abuse and sufferings Jesus would endure, but the agony of the cross and the destitution of spirit He experienced. Yes, it is all about the cross where Jesus died for us and our salvation, and then the psalm says, “*All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord.*” (Psalm 22:27)

That is what Jesus said, “*And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself,*” (v.32) and indeed, that is how we have been brought to know and believe that Jesus is our Redeemer Lord. We follow Him, and we are ready to praise and glorify His name. We are ready by the power of the Spirit to take up our cross

and follow Him. We are ready to proclaim the **glory** of our crucified Savior.

“In the cross of Christ I glory
Tow’ring o’er the wrecks of time,
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.

“Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure,
By the Cross are sanctified,
Peace is there that knows no measure,
Joys that thro’ all time
abide.”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 354:1,4)

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.