

Sermon for Lent 5

March 18, 2018

“To the Glory of God the Father”

Grace, mercy, and peace are yours from Jesus who has thrown out the ruler of this world. Amen.

Fellow Christians, it was an exciting week – the Passover Festival was almost there. Jerusalem was packed full of excited worshippers who had made their way to the temple for the Passover celebrations.

Among the crowd were some outsiders, some Greeks, who were probably converts to Judaism, and they seemed to be a little timid about talking to Jesus themselves -but they found Philip, and made a great request, “Sir, we want to see Jesus.”

Philip went to Andrew and then they went to Jesus, and I wonder if the Greeks got what they were expecting when they met Jesus. In particular, consider the directions Jesus gave to them, hard words he’d said to many other people too:

Anyone who loves his life destroys it. And the one who hates his life in this world will hold on to it for eternal life.

That’s a hard message for Greeks, for Jews, and for Americans. Because we all like to seek glory for ourselves. We want to succeed in life and do well in life and be respected for who we are and what we contribute the world around us. One person’s idea of success might be to travel the world and see all sorts of wonders; another person’s idea of success is to pass on to the 5th generation the family’s land and the ag life. Whatever the idea of worldly success is in your mind, though, Jesus gives an important warning:

Anyone who loves his life destroys it.

That doesn’t mean you must hate what you do for a living. And it certainly does not mean that you should hate sunsets or the place you live. What it means is that you cannot love your life in this world more than you love God. It means that you cannot be willing to succeed in this life and get the glory that comes with success if it means you turn your back on God.

Jesus holds out the alternative, too: the one who hates his life in this world will hold on to it for eternal life. Again, that does not mean hating a wide-open horizon or that you can’t cheer for the Cornhuskers. It does mean that your top priority and the guiding paradigm of your life is God. And there’s nothing you aren’t ready to get rid of to keep it from coming between you and God.

But that’s a tall task, a task that every single one of us has failed at already, and will fail at again and again in the future. We sinful humans want the glory to go to us; but to God alone be the glory!

Jesus made a declaration: The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. He said this during Holy Week (we’ve got this text a week early if we’re thinking about a timeline of events). Earlier in his ministry, Jesus had often said, “My hour has not yet come,” because he had more preaching and teaching to do first. But now, now it was time to be glorified.

Jesus explains his glory with an illustration. He compares himself to a kernel of wheat, to a seed. If a kernel of wheat stays a kernel of wheat, it doesn’t accomplish anything. Jesus could have lived forever on earth, churning out good deed after good deed and miraculous healing after miraculous healing, but he wouldn’t have really accomplished anything. He would have had a

lot of glory and popularity, but he wouldn't have accomplished anything. But if a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies and stops being a kernel of wheat, it grows up into its own wheat plant and produces much grain. Jesus was going to have to die in order to really accomplish something, so that instead of having one righteous human, there would be many righteous humans.

But that death would be much more painful than a seed's death as it sprouts and grows. Painful, in fact, we get to see Jesus' human nature already feeling the stress of what was coming later that week. Jesus admits, "Now my soul is troubled." Why now? Because now was the time. But Jesus was also resolute, "What shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour? No, this is the reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name.'"

It's so hard to try to understand the inner workings of the Trinity, and yet we see here, Jesus, according to his human nature, even he says, "It's not about me. The glory goes to God." It wasn't about being easy, it wasn't about Jesus being saved, the whole point and purpose that Jesus came for was to give glory to God by saving us.

And again, Jesus repeats, now is the time. The clash God promised in Eden between the woman and the serpent was here: "Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be thrown out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

That was how God would get glory, by saving the world and drawing people to himself. That "all" was good news for the Greeks who wanted to see Jesus, and good news for you and for me. We're not left out. Jesus wasn't here to only save the Jews. God would glorify himself, just as he thundered from heaven.

Let us, you and me, join those Greeks in their request, "Sir, we want to see Jesus." Let that be our goal in this life, that the glory would go to Jesus, let us be no more than servants of him, and let us hold onto Jesus' wonderful promise: where I am, there my servant will be also. Amen.

Text: *John 12:20-33*

Jesus' suffering also reveals his glory.

²⁰Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Festival. ²¹They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we want to see Jesus." ²²Philip went to tell Andrew. Andrew came with Philip and told Jesus.

²³Jesus answered them, "The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Amen, Amen, I tell you: Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it continues to be one kernel. But if it dies, it produces much grain. ²⁵Anyone who loves his life destroys it. And the one who hates his life in this world will hold on to it for eternal life. ²⁶If anyone serves me, let him follow me. And where I am, there my servant will be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

²⁷"Now my soul is troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, this is the reason I came to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify your name!"

A voice came from heaven: "I have glorified my name, and I will glorify it again."

²⁹The crowd standing there heard it and said it thundered. Others said an angel talked to him. ³⁰Jesus answered, "This voice was not for my sake but for yours.

³¹"Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be thrown out. ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." ³³He said this to indicate what kind of death he was going to die.