

# The Glory of the Seed that Dies – *John 12:20-33*

**Introduction** – Here is an Advent sermon. The imputation of your gross sin and the full brunt of God’s righteous and holy wrath placed upon the Incarnate Son of God is the “*reason for the season*” (even if you do not find this on your Christmas cards). This is why Jesus would say, “*The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.*” This was the reason for His coming.

**The Hour Has Come** (vv20-23) – Right on the heels of the worrying Pharisees that “*the whole world has gone after Him*” a portion of the world, the Greeks, do just that (vv20-22). Jesus’ answer to the request of the Greeks was striking in that He had often said that His hour had not yet come (at the wedding in Cana 2:4, the Feast of Tabernacles 7:6, and when the authorities failed to arrest Him 8:20). And what was this hour that had come? “*...that the Son of Man should be glorified*” (v23). At first this all points to the Son of Man ascending to His throne and all nations coming to serve Him (Dan 7:13-14). His hearers would imagine the Triumphal Entry moving towards a military overthrow and world conquest.

**A Seed that Dies** (vv24-25) – That was not the glory Jesus had in mind; He had a deeper glory. But in order for that deeper glory to arrive, the grain of wheat had to be buried and die, because that seed would then produce much fruit. If Jesus had “*loved his life,*” He would not have turned it over to die (v25). The thing that displayed the true glory of the Son of Man was His crucifixion, and the thing that displays the true glory of the Son of Man is the declaration of His crucifixion, His self-sacrifice in making atonement for sin. “*He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life*” (v25). This is first about Jesus, whose humiliation resulted in His exaltation (Phil 2:8-11).

**Follow Me** (v26) – In addition, v25 is a principle extended to the followers of Jesus. What He is going to go through His followers must also go through. The exultation they all had felt with the raising of Lazarus from the grave and from the glorious Triumphal Entry like a king riding into Jerusalem made many want to “*see*” Jesus. But now Jesus, with His eyes focused on the hour of glory, tells them “*if anyone serves Me, let him follow Me,*” – to the cross, that is. Of course, we know that on the night of His arrest, the shepherd was struck and the sheep were scattered (Mark 14:50). Would you have followed him then? “*When Christ calls a man, He bids Him come and die*” – Bonhoeffer.

**The Glory of the Seed that Dies** (vv27-30) – His coming crucifixion is before His own eyes, but it is not just the horrifying death that He must endure that causes His soul to be troubled and consider asking the Father to save Him from this hour. The greatest part of His travail and later His suffering on the cross was the receipt of God’s full wrath for our sins. Jesus was fully human, and just as other men feel their stomachs turning before some dreadful ordeal, so Christ trembled as He contemplated the coming judgment He would face. Let us learn from our Lord’s example “*that inward conflict of soul is not necessarily in itself a sinful thing*” – Ryle.

**“Father, Glorify Your Name”** – The thing that drove Christ’s resolve was His “*chief end – to glorify God...*” The man born blind in Chapter 9 was blind “*so that the works of God should be revealed in him*” (9:3). Just as with that incident, Jesus looks for the purpose and not the cause of the trouble or trial. Why did Lazarus die? “*...for the glory of God...*” (11:4). But this is always easier to say when you are dealing with someone else’s hardship. Now Jesus is facing it and it weighs heavy (as hardships do on us as well). Looking to the purpose (the glory of God in the salvation of the elect) and not the cause (the terrible and holy judgment of God), Jesus resolves, “*Father, glorify Your name.*”

Just as God was glorified in the Incarnation with the song of angels (Luke 2:14), so He spoke Himself at the initiation into Christ’s ministry (Matt 3:16-17), at His transfiguration (Matt 17:5), and again here the Father’s voice is heard, like thunder or the voice of an angel, “*I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.*” God’s name is glorified and in fact that is His chief end as well (Rev 4:11, Eph 1:6).

**The Judgment of This World** (vv31-33) – This phrase marks the imputation of man’s sin to Christ and why God “*so loved the world*” (3:16). The work on the cross also marked the end of the rule of Satan upon this world (Col 2:15). All of this is speaking of the work that would happen on the cross (which they would not understand at this moment – see again 12:16). “*If I am lifted up...*” (how?) ... *I will draw all peoples to Myself*” (like the Greeks who came to see Jesus, vv20-21). Not as a great teacher, not as a good example, not as a worldly deliverer, but as the Savior of the world.

**Would you See Jesus?** – To really “see” Jesus, you can’t just go see the man (which we can’t now anyway). In order to “see” Jesus, He must be portrayed to you in the Gospel by means of His Word and Spirit (Gal 3:1, Heb 2:9). To see Jesus, you must follow Jesus – to the cross.

**Following Jesus to the Cross** – For those with ears to hear, this is glorious, this is the path of the seed that dies...and bears much fruit. The cross is glorious because it declares the full debt payment for our sins. We are forgiven. The grace of God through the death of Jesus has paid it all. And when Christ bids us to die that is a gracious offer. For if you are united to Jesus, you are united to Him on the cross, in His death, and so you are not free to sin but rather freed from sin (Rom 6:1-3, 11-13). We mortify our flesh and present our lives to God. Are you stuck in yourself? Your sins, lies, lusts, laziness, covetousness, greed, grumbling and complaining, bitterness? There is only one way out. You must die.

More fundamentally, we experience a death at the cross, a death to our self-centeredness. We would see Jesus, but that means coming to the cross and letting our desires for life die, our dreams and aspirations die, the way we think our story should go die, our reputation in the world die, if any of it stands in the way of our soul being with Jesus. We must hate our life compared to the surpassing glory and excellence of knowing Christ Jesus (Phil 3:7-11). Now why would we do that? “*If anyone serves Me, him My father will honor*” (v26b).

---

Dave Hatcher – November 27, 2022