

"The Judgment of This World"

John 12:20-33

Lent 5B, March 29, 2009

The Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor

Zion West Walworth United Methodist Church

John 12:20-33

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "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 earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Prayer.

Some Greeks come to see Jesus...

More than just "see" Jesus.

They want to see Jesus in a new and different way.

Kind of like when the disciples,

before they were disciples,

"saw" Jesus for the very first time.

These Greeks wanted to

belong to Jesus.

Unfortunately, they don't know him;

never met him.

But they know a friend of a friend

who can get them to meet him.

Jesus is a pretty popular personality.

Especially since he raised Lazarus from the dead!

That's enough to gather a crowd

of rubber-neck-ers,

fame seekers,

ride in on his coat tails want-a-bees.

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And the crowd was large.
 Unfortunately, Jesus had also become pretty popular
 with the leadership of organized religion.
 He threatened everything they had ever worked for;
 power, authority, leadership.
 The chief priests were so threatened by Jesus,
 they had murder in their hearts:
 kill Lazarus,
 claim it was all a fraud,
 send the crowds home,
 then deal with Jesus later.

Jesus had come to town.
 The crowd was all whooped up.
 And some Greeks come to see Jesus...
 They knew Philip, who, of course knew Jesus.
 So they go to him first.
 Philip, a Greek himself, sees what he can do.
 So Philip goes to his close friend and fellow disciple, Andrew.
 Talking to Jesus is done better when done in pairs.
 Together, *"they went and told Jesus."*

Has it ever occurred to you to ask God "why?"
 Why did you allow sin to enter the world in the first place?
 Why did you allow us to have free will?
 so that we can disappoint you all the time?
 Why do you love us even when we disappoint you?
 Why did you go to the trouble of sending us Jesus
 to forgive us and save us?
 why not just make it so?
 Why did Jesus do what he did?
 allow himself to suffer and die a horrible, humiliating death?
 I ask God "why" a lot; and I think most all of us do, too.
 Some day, I believe that God will satisfy our curiosity.
 In the mean time,
 I have found that faith deepens
 when we ask the questions
 and wrestle with those questions for a while.
 Today we can't wrestle with all the "why" questions.
 But we can work on one of them:
 Why did Jesus do what he did?

Jesus' response to Andrew and Philip
 about the visiting Greeks gives us an opportunity

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to reflect upon the death of Jesus:
why did he do what he did?

Jesus tells a short parable
That likens himself
to a grain of wheat:
*"unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies,
it remains just a single grain;
but if it dies, it bears much fruit."*
For the farmers, gardeners, and biologists in the crowd,
you probably understand.
For the rest of us,
the seed must give up its life as it knows it,
be planted into fertile ground,
submit itself to the nurture of God,
shed its outer skin,
give all of its nutrients to a new creation,
then cease to be,
so that its new life can carry on.
Jesus too, like one grain of wheat,
would have to give up life as he knew it,
submit himself to the care and nurture of God,
be changed,
then cease to be as he once was,
so that a new expression of 'God with us' might carry on.

But why?

Jesus reveals to his disciples today
3 reasons why he would have to die:
to Glorify God,
to Reconcile us with God,
and to Invite us to Serve Him.
"Father," Jesus says in the 28th verse,
"Glorify your name."

First.

Jesus dies to give God glory!
God thrives on glory! our glory; your glory and mine.
God breathed life into us: give God glory!
God loves us - for no other reason than we are his creation: give God glory!
God is with us always through the gift of the Holy Spirit: give God glory!
God sent us Jesus: give God glory!
God taught us his way, and teaches us his will, by the example set by Jesus: give God glory!

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God forgives us by and through Jesus' death on the cross: give God glory!
 God saves us from death by and through Jesus' resurrection from the dead: give God glory!
 Jesus suffered death on the cross to give God glory.
 Therefore, in everything - I mean everything - you say and do, give God glory!

Secondly.

Jesus did what he did to Reconcile us with God.

Our relationship with God

is broken by sin; original, overt, omission, what ever...

Sin is what separates us from God;

when we choose to go our own way

and not follow God's way.

But Jesus Christ reunites us with God,

brings us back together.

He is the connection

bringing together the human and the divine.

Tradition holds it that

His death reunites us by 3 ways (atonement theologies):

- Ransom: the life of Jesus was a ransom paid for us.
- Substitution: his death was a substitution for us and our sins.
- Model: his death was a model of self-sacrifice for Christian moral behavior.

Thirdly.

Jesus did what he did as an Invitation to Serve him."

*"Whoever serves me must follow me,
 and where I am,*

there will my servant be also.

Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.¹"

Here is the tension:

one must first believe in Jesus

if one is to become a partner in the relationship.

This is a servant - master partnership.

Both are necessary and life giving:

It is necessary to have a personal relationship with Christ.

It is life giving by the nature that community is formed, i.e. the church.

This defines discipleship: serving Jesus.

As a result, it restores us to God.

Life has meaning because of Christ's death;

we are the fruit of his death.

Let us likewise glorify God,

be reconciled to God and allow our partnership be restored,

¹ John 12:26

and let us serve God through Christian discipleship.
This is the Word of the Lord.
Amen.

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