

“It is for This Reason ...”

John 12:20-36

April 2, 2006 – The Fifth Sunday of Lent

The Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor

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John 12:20-36

²⁰Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks.

²¹They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” ²²Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Very 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.

²⁵Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

²⁷“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. ²⁸Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” ²⁹The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” ³⁰Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

³⁴The crowd answered him, “We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” ³⁵Jesus said to them, “The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. ³⁶While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light.” After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them.

Prayer.

“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” (v.23)

Among those who went up the mount of Zion, who climbed Jerusalem’s heights to the temple perched on the pinnacle, to celebrate Passover, were some Greeks.

“Some who?” you rightly ask in disbelief. Some Greeks we read, right there, just

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like it reads in the Bible. Some Greeks go to a Jewish festival. They would have stuck out like a sore thumb; like Maxwell Smart undercover at an African Pride Festival; like punk rockers at a Bill Gaither concert. Greeks at Passover – now there is a good one for you. It is a crazy world.

Except they didn't attend to participate in the festival of Passover. While they were among those who came to worship, they had different motives. They had come to see Jesus.

Breaking from history, experience and culture these Greeks came seeking Jesus, perhaps for reasons very similar to what brought you here to church this morning.

Why make the effort? Why come to seek Jesus?

Is it that we've heard that he is a great preacher with a great line? You know "blessed are the poor ..., blessed are the merciful ..., blessed are the pure in heart." That kind of message will preach on Sunday, and every other day of the week, too. Do we seek him because he's the first preacher to come along in a while who actually has some content, some depth to their message?

Do we seek Jesus because he has been known to cast a few miracles, change a little water into wine, heal a few suffering chaps, lift up a few widows, still the waters, calm the seas, even take a late evening stroll on the surface of a stormy lake? Do we seek him because, perhaps he can make me whole once again?

Or do we seek Jesus because of what he won for us, and we're looking to get our fair share? Do we seek him because of the forgiveness Jesus secured for us through his death on the cross? Or because of the eternal life he won for us through his death and resurrection from the grave? What is it that has drawn you to Jesus?

What is it that caused you this day to become like Greeks, and brought you seeking Jesus?

"It is for this reason that I have come to this hour." (v.27b)

Jesus comes to this hour to be glorified. He uses the metaphor of a seed of grain. If it isn't planted, it will never be anything other than a seed. But plant it in the ground, well then, the seed will be glorified by its death and grow as a new stalk of grain. Likewise, Jesus will die, will be planted, and through the grave, will bring forth life anew.

"Spring planting Jesus?" you ask in disbelief, "pastor, you must have a screw

loose or something.” Hey- it’s Jesus’ metaphor, not mine!

Glory in death? Sounds like a suicide bomber, a terrorist, or something like that. What glory is there in martyrdom?

Other than birth, death is the only other life passage that we all share. All are born, and all will die. The question remains, “what are you going to do with the time in-between?”

Will you live a life of beauty and sunshine, bringing hope and blessings where ever you go and with whom ever you meet? Or will you lead a life handcuffed to the expectations of others- better job, bigger salary, more toys? Will you become the well of God’s grace in this world, filled with Living Water that quenches all thirst, or will you become just another consumer, tax payer, and faceless number?

Death. We must all face it. Because we all face it, the only solution for Jesus was for him to face it, too. The only road that leads to salvation first must take us to Calvary and through the garden tomb.

The glorification of Jesus begins on Good Friday, but is only made complete on Easter morning.

Just what was the reason you came to seek Jesus?

How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” (v.34b) the crowd asks.

We are so devastated with the overwhelming nature of Lent, of 40 days in the wilderness being tempted by the Devil, of Passion, suffering and death by crucifixion at the hands of an angry mob, dirty public officials, and blood stained practitioners of organized religion, that we nearly lose sight of the fact that ...

“God so loved the world, that he gave us his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him will not perish, but will have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

God’s motive is love. What’s yours?

Is it fear of eternal damnation? (a little bit of fear never hurt anybody!). Is your faith motivated out of obligation? Or is your faith driven because of a relationship with Jesus?

³⁵ Jesus said to them, “The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have

the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. ³⁶While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light.”

The light is lifted up. Sometimes we feel so lost and confused we don't know what to think. Faith needs to be simple. Served up as simple, common fare. Meat and potatoes. Yes and no. Love and hate. Light and darkness. Bread and wine.

As if love wasn't enough to convince you ...

When faith is as simple as looking to the Light, following where the Light leads, being drawn towards the Light like moths drawn to a summer street lamp – when faith is this simple we can make the easy decision. We can make the right call.

Too often we attempt to split ethical and theological hairs. Too often we paint ourselves into a corner with justifying excuses in a feeble attempt to avoid responsibility and to enable our outrageous behavior. We want our cake and to eat it, too. “The world isn't just black and white, it is filled with shades of gray,” we whine.

Oh, please. Save me the trouble.

Faith in Jesus Christ begins simply with looking to him as the Light of your life. Jesus is the right call when the choice is only between darkness and light. Simply allow him to become the Light towards which we are drawn.

“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” (v.23)

Jesus suffers, dies, and three days later, well ... you'll have to show up Easter morning to learn the rest. This is what Jesus means when he tells the crowds, the Greeks, the disciples, and us here today that his is to be glorified.

Each of us comes to Jesus with many motives; though God's only motive is love.

Glory in Jesus is an invitation to us to join him. His road leads through death and to beyond the grave.

Lift up your eyes and look to the Light. Allow him to be your guide. Just let go; and allow it to be.

It is for this reason that he has come. The Word of the Lord as it has come to me. Thanks be to God. Amen.