

John 12:20-33

New International Version

### **Jesus Predicts His Death**

**20** Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. **21** They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." **22** Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. **23** Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. **24** Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. **25** Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. **26** Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. **27** "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. **28** Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." **29** The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. **30** Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. **31** Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. **32** And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." **33** He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

## Reflection on John 12 20-33

Some people will say there are three things that should not be spoken about, especially over a meal, so I was once informed. I am sure you know what they are, religion, sex and politics.

For those of us who have children, we have all tried to do the safe sex talk and probably cringed at how we dealt with it after. Politics is definitely not a strength of mine; our views are personal to us and if we do talk about politics we often end up agreeing to disagree.

This is very often the same with religion, unless we are speaking to likeminded people. Again, our beliefs are personal to us, as much as we share our faith with others we are not always going to agree.

But what about death?

How many of us engage in this conversation?

We acknowledge death when it happens but we don't really talk about it with any substance until it does happen and we certainly do not talk about it with enthusiasm. Very often we will avoid it.

The death of our loved ones is too real and painful. Our own death is pretty scary. The relationships and parts of our lives that have died are too difficult. So because of this death is a subject that is often avoided. Especially in a culture where everyone wants to be happy and feel good.

If we go back to the beginning of our reading today, I suspect that the Greeks who wanted to see Jesus were not expecting to hear about death. Even more so because of all the good and positive things they had heard Jesus had done. He had cleansed the temple, healed many people, turned water into wine, fed five thousand and given sight to the blind.

I don't know why they wanted to see Jesus but I can understand the desire. We will all have our own reasons for wanting to see Jesus. Some of us may want to see Jesus physically or maybe we just want to feel his presence in a situation we find ourselves in.

I was once asked if you want to see Jesus look at what you pray for. More often than not at the time it was a to do list. When we are young we may have often prayed for only positive things, to win the race, to get all our homework done. As we grow into teenagers and young adults we may pray for others around us and the world we live in, but there was probably still a to do list. As a more mature person our prayers may have broadened but I bet surrounding those prayers there is still a to do list.

Some of you may be familiar with these kinds of prayers. Where we want to see Jesus on our terms.

If we are all honest with ourselves we have all wanted something from Jesus more than what we have wanted Jesus himself. We have all at some point during our life been consumers of God's life rather than participants in God's life.

We all pick and choose what we like and want but then skip over the parts that we don't want, like or understand.

We cannot do this, we cannot pick and choose what parts of Christianity appeal to us and only stick to and learn about them. Christianity is our faith which means that we have to engage in all aspects of the life of God which also means the death and the resurrection of Jesus.

This is the message that Jesus was giving to the Greeks who were, I'd imagine very excited at the prospect of seeing Jesus. But when they got there this is what Jesus said "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me."

In verse 27, Jesus says that "Death is soul troubling." I am sure we will all agree with this. When we refuse to acknowledge the reality of death we are indirectly refusing to see Jesus. There are two people that came to my mind when I wrote this and that is Rose and Hilda Cole both had such a strong faith they had both fully acknowledged death they had acknowledged Jesus' and their own. Many of us were fortunate enough to have been blessed and taught by one

or both of them. As they both came to the end of their earthly lives they knew that there was more waiting for them and they tried to reassure others around them of this.

Death however is not always physical, it can be spiritual or emotional. We die a thousand deaths a day, there are the deaths of relationships, marriages, hopes, dreams, careers, health, and beliefs. Regardless of what it looks like, this is not the end. Resurrection is always hidden in death. There can be however, no resurrection without death.

Depending on the degree to which we are afraid of dying is the degree to which we are afraid to fully live. Every time we avoid and turn away from death we are indirectly proclaiming it stronger than God, more real than life.

The unspoken fear and avoidance of death underlies all of our, 'what if questions' what if I fail, lose fall down? What if I get hurt? What if I lose the one I need and love? Every what if question separates us and isolates us from life, God, one another and ourselves. It keeps us from bearing fruit. We are just a single grain of wheat. We might survive but we aren't really alive.

Jesus did not ask to be saved from death. He is unwilling to settle for survival when the fullness of God's life is before him. He knows that in God's world strength is found in weakness, victory looks like defeat and life is born of death.

Regardless of who or what in our life has died, God in Christ has already cleared the way forward. We have a path to follow. The path is the death of Jesus. Jesus' death however is of no benefit to us if we are not willing to submit to death, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Ultimately, death in whatever way it comes to us, means that we entrust all that we are and all that we have to God.

Jesus says "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." God is drawing all of us to be with him. So that where God is we too can be.

