

March 25, 2012 – 5th Sunday of Lent
“A Single Seed”
John 12:20-33

20 Some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration 21 paid a visit to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee. They said, "Sir, we want to meet Jesus." 22 Philip told Andrew about it, and they went together to ask Jesus.

23 Jesus replied, "Now the time has come for the Son of Man* to enter into his glory. 24 I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new lives. 25 Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity. 26 Anyone who wants to be my disciple must follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And the Father will honor anyone who serves me.

27 "Now my soul is deeply troubled. Should I pray, 'Father, save me from this hour'? But this is the very reason I came! 28 Father, bring glory to your name."

Then a voice spoke from heaven, saying, "I have already brought glory to my name, and I will do so again." 29 When the crowd heard the voice, some thought it was thunder, while others declared an angel had spoken to him.

30 Then Jesus told them, "The voice was for your benefit, not mine. 31 The time for judging this world has come, when Satan, the ruler of this world, will be cast out. 32 And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself." 33 He said this to indicate how he was going to die.

Although Palm Sunday is next week, today's text actually follows the events of Palm Sunday or the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem. People were hailing Him as "King of Israel." They believed that He was the one who would liberate them from Roman rule. His popularity was growing. They knew of His miracles; many in the crowd had seen Jesus call Lazarus from the tomb, raising him from the dead, and they were telling others about it.

All of this was frustrating the Pharisees who were hoping to find a way of getting rid of Jesus. They felt things were getting out of control, and were saying, "Our efforts are

futile; we've accomplished nothing, look! The whole world has gone after Him!" If Jesus' purpose was to lead a rebellion, this would have been a perfect time to recruit an army to revolt and lead an attack against the Romans.

Some Greeks were among those who were there in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, which is why the Pharisees were saying the "whole world" had gone after Jesus. The Greeks seeking to meet Jesus was an illustration of this. They could have been visitors from Greece and may have approached Philip because, although Philip was a Jew, he had a Greek name. Also, Philip was from Bethsaida, a town near the Greek territory of Decapolis. The city of Bethsaida itself had a large Greek population. Philip may have been able, therefore, to speak Greek.

I was thinking of the parade that was given in honor of the Giants when they won the super bowl. People lined the streets; there was great excitement, a festive atmosphere. Everyone wanted to get a glance at the champions, their heroes, sport celebrities. Well, this is the atmosphere on Palm Sunday. Jesus had become a celebrity and people wanted to see Him. No wonder these Greeks made that very request, (v21)
"Sir, we want to meet Jesus."

Philip went and told Andrew and together they went and told Jesus that some Greeks wanted to meet Him. We're not told if they got to meet Jesus or not, but the response from Jesus seems kind of strange. The first thing He says in v23 is:
"Now the time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory."

Well, okay, maybe this made some sense to the disciples. If you think of the word, "glory" as "honor" or replace it with the word "spotlight" – now the time has come for Jesus to enter the spotlight. That makes sense, but then the strange part comes (v24-25):
"I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new lives."

If I were Philip I would have said, "Right...ah what?" What does that have to do with some Greeks wanting to meet Jesus?

Up to now Jesus was saying, the time had not yet come; now He announces the time has come. But it was not the time for Him to be honored as a King, it was time for death; and through Jesus' death, He was to bring us to God. The request from the Greeks was a reminder that He would give His life for the whole world.

Unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil where it actually dies – it will remain only a kernel of wheat. Unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil where it actually dies- it will not become a new blade of wheat producing more grain and many new kernels.

The kernel of wheat is Jesus, he is telling His disciples He would die, which was necessary not only for the salvation of the Jews, but for all people everywhere.

The time had come for Jesus, like that kernel of wheat, to die. This is the only way there could be a plentiful harvest of new lives. Jesus would accomplish more by His death, than if He had become the King of Israel on an earthly throne. Indeed, by being lifted up on the cross He would draw ALL people to Himself. Jesus would be glorified, or “brought into the spotlight” not by becoming an earthly King, but by His suffering, death, and Resurrection; and His death became our only way to life.

look at vs 25

Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity.

Uh oh, you know what Jesus is saying here don't you? He's saying that His death was also a pattern He expects His disciples to follow.

This dying in order to bring life is a universal law that finds its highest form on the Cross, and is the law of the Christian disciple. We can only live if we are willing to die.

Here is what Paul said: 1 Corinthians 15:36

When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn't grow into a plant unless it dies first.

If this morning I gave each of you a seed from a plant or flower, or tree; what good would it be if you kept that seed and never planted it? If you plant it, if you give it up, you lose the seed, and it will die in the soil; yet that is the only way it will produce a new plant, flower or tree.

(v25 – The Message) In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you'll have it forever, real and eternal.

Self-love is not the measure of a disciple, but self-giving love. I should clarify that Jesus was not promoting self-hatred or depression. He was speaking of the necessity of His disciples being committed to the priorities of the kingdom of God, and not according to those of the world.

26 Anyone who wants to be my disciple must follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And the Father will honor anyone who serves me.

I ask you to consider who this Jesus is, that He would stand before all mankind and say “I am the Ideal of human conduct; I am Incarnate Perfection, and all of you are to take Me as your pattern and guided.” I don't have time to dwell on this, but consider it.

We are called to be devoted to Jesus, not devoted to a cause, but to Him.

Disciples are not given the option of whether they will live their lives after the pattern of Jesus. Serving him is nonnegotiable, He says, “My disciple MUST follow me. This

stands to reason, “because my servant must be where I am.” Ever play follow the leader? You had to walk wherever the leader walked, and do whatever the leader did. When you follow a leader you will be where the leader is.

Servants accompany and comply; they do not set the terms of their association with the one they serve. However, the rewards for service are great: “the Father will honor anyone who serves Me.” There is no greater honor than being commended by the Master, “Well done, my good and faithful servant!” (Matt. 25:21, 23).

What does Jesus mean by “follow Me”? He is saying we must identify with His death that is, we must give up our claim to the right to ourselves. There must be a free and full committal of myself to God. We don’t lose our unique personality, but we die to the disposition of sin which is giving up our rights and, instead live by faith in Christ who gave Himself for us.

Galatians 2:20

My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Notice, that we have been crucified with Christ. We are already dead to sin, why do we live in it. Believe and live what you are, dead to sin. Stand up against it when tempted and remind yourself you are dead to sin, and alive to Christ;

So you see, we are called to give up our will, our pleasures, our desires, give up our lives to Christ. We identify with the death of Christ, we no longer live for ourselves and the patterns of this world, we are dead to sin, we follow Christ; we have abandoned ourselves to Christ. We seek Him, not our success, nor our pleasures, not our desires, we seek Him and Him alone. It will cost you everything to be His disciple, but He promises the reward will be great, “The Father will honor anyone who serves me.”

It is one thing to want to meet Jesus. It is one thing to get excited about the glory to which Jesus refers. It is something quite different to realize that to do so means being committed to death, sacrifice, surrender, servanthood and a complete re-ordering of one’s life. Jesus makes it clear that fruitfulness comes with a commitment, a cost.

This is not easy for us to hear. This was not what the disciples wanted to hear; they want the party atmosphere of Palm Sunday, they wanted to be part of the popularity of Jesus, they wanted Jesus to talk about His great acts. That’s what we want from our celebrities, our heroes, not talk of death. Jesus says (v27)

"Now my soul is deeply troubled. Should I pray, 'Father, save me from this hour'? But this is the very reason I came!

Jesus' own soul was deeply troubled, should He pray, "Father, get me out of this?" No, this is the very reason He came, to suffer, die to give His life for others, and we must do the same. He knew the agony of the brutality he was facing. Yet as always, He was submitting to the Father's will in all things. And we must do the same.

What happens next is important (v28-31) Jesus says,

28 Father, bring glory to your name."

Then a voice spoke from heaven, saying, "I have already brought glory to my name, and I will do so again." 29 When the crowd heard the voice, some thought it was thunder, while others declared an angel had spoken to him.

30 Then Jesus told them, "The voice was for your benefit, not mine.

31 The time for judging this world has come, when Satan, the ruler of this world, will be cast out. 32 And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself." 33 He said this to indicate how he was going to die.

Jesus needed no affirmation from the Father. This was for the benefit to those who were there. Some thought they heard thunder, some the voice of an angel. Jesus must interpret the message. Judgment is coming; the ruler of darkness is going to be expelled from the world.

Along with this affirmation of the final defeat of Satan, ruler of this world is this declaration: "And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone (all people) to myself" (v32).

The loving but violent act of Christ being lifted up on the Cross will win the hearts of those who respond in faith. Yet there is even still more good news. There is another meaning implied in the word "from," which here literally means "out of." The cross has a natural consequence—resurrection! Jesus will be lifted "out of" the earth.

Want to be a disciple of Jesus? Willing to pay the price? Willing to accept that something must be given up? That suffering, sacrifice, servanthood and ultimately, death to self are required? Perhaps we need to ask the question again: Do I still want to see Jesus?