

LENT 5 BG JOHN 12

OPEN BIBLE

MARCH 25, 2012

John 12:20-33

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.

There must be hundreds of pictures and drawings of Jesus Christ. Artists for two thousand years have tried to capture in a picture the soul of Jesus. He can be depicted in many ways: shepherd, teacher, one who blesses children, the miracle worker, etc. But however he is pictured, it must be remembered that **CHRIST COMES WITH A CROSS**. The cross is central to his identity.

I. This is true for Christ.

II. It is also true for his followers.

Palm Sunday expectations didn't include a cross. It was Passover time and thousands of pilgrims were in Jerusalem to celebrate. Expectation of the Messiah King was especially high. A long-standing tradition expected the Messiah King to be revealed at the Passover. But the miracles of Jesus, especially the recent raising of Lazarus from the dead, raised those expectations as never before.

The Messiah King they were looking for was one who would restore the kingdom of David and liberate them from the Romans. This is the glory of the Messiah they envisioned. It was a glory similar to what David had experienced many times. An example of this glory is recorded in 2 Samuel 12. General Joab called for King David to come to the Ammonite city of Rabbah for the completion of its conquest so David would receive the glory. After the city was taken, *"David took the crown from their king's head, and it was placed on his own head. It weighed a talent of gold, and it was set with precious stones."* (2 Sam. 12:30) The popular messianic expectation was more like this.

But Christ makes clear that the Messiah King they welcomed a day or so earlier **COMES WITH A CROSS**. His glory is in his suffering and death to redeem the world from sin. The coming of Greeks is a reminder that he is the Savior of the world and he says: *"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."*

God's timing is important in John's Gospel. He often observes that God acts according to a plan and that plan is fixed to certain moments in history. A special moment in history had come—the time when the Savior of all nations would be glorified.

But when Jesus speaks of his glory he was talking about his cross—his suffering and death. It was for this he came to the world—for this moment: *“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. Father, glorify your name!”* His destiny, his purpose in history, his role in God's plan is to save the world by his personal sacrifice.

He explained the momentous importance of his cross when he said that his cross meant judgment on the world and the devil: *Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.* It appears to the human eye that Christ is judged, condemned and defeated by the cross. But it is the world that is under judgment by God. The cross is God's judgment against our sins. Christ was but the innocent lamb offered in our place. When we see the cross it is a jarring reminder of God's fierce condemnation of our sinful mind and heart, our strife and hurtful ways. The cross is God's judgment of our sins, yet by God's mercy it is not we who are on the cross; it is Christ there in our place.

And it is not only are sinners under judgment in Christ's cross; even more it is the author of disobedience—the prince of this world—who is under judgment. By Christ's cross Satan is driven out. He has lost his place as the Accuser who accuses us before God. He has not lost his power to tempt and destroy, but he has lost his power to accuse us before God and negate our hope of eternal life. Our sins are paid for by the blood of Christ and forgiven by the Father, so we are free both from Satan's accusation and God's condemnation.

Christ's glory is not crowns of gold and jewels; it is a crown of thorns and all that goes with his cross by which he has redeemed the world. **CHRIST COMES WITH A CROSS!**

II. His true followers come with a cross too.

Jesus compared his death to a seed planted: *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.* The point: As a seed sacrificed in the ground produces a new plant that yields many seeds, so his death would produce a new kingdom of believers who serve his Father. This has application in our lives. He appraises our lives as they are by nature and calls upon us to plant our lives like a seed that brings forth a new life of service. *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 honor the one who serves me.* His cross is a pattern of obedience and service for his followers. Paul understood this and wrote: “I am crucified with Christ...” i.e., I have died to this world so I can belong to Christ and follow him as a servant of the Father.

There are many ways to live our lives. The most common way, that which is the natural expression of sinful human flesh is to make life a quest for self-fulfillment and pleasure. This is what Christ means by loving your life in this world. But the life of following Christ is to be planted like a seed that sacrifices itself to bring forth many acts of love. This is following Christ, a life bearing the imprint of the cross, of hating this world and dying to it so that we may live a new life in Christ.

The cross is Christ's glory and following the way of the cross is also our path to glory.

But now let's give attention to what Jesus means when he says that by his cross he will draw all people to himself. *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.*" He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. His cross is everyone's cross. Christ is crucified on behalf of every person. He is sacrificed by God to redeem the whole world. The People's Bible offers this comment: "At the cross all people must invariably accept or reject Jesus as Savior." (PB. 180) The cross won't let us ignore Jesus. We must conclude either that the cross is foolishness or that it is the symbol of God's infinite love and mercy. If there is a Savior who loves me so much that he willingly sacrificed himself for me, how can I walk away? The cross draws me to Jesus. I am humbled before his cross. I am speechless.

John Stainer, composer of the musical work *The Crucifixion* captures the power of the appeal of Christ's cross in *The Appeal of the Crucified*. The scene is Calvary and Christ is speaking from his cross. First there is a brief recitative:

Is it nothing to you all you who pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord has afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.

Then the full chorus responds:

From the throne of his cross, the King of grief cries out to a world of unbelief: Oh! Men and women, afar and nigh, is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? I laid my eternal power aside, I came from the home of the Glorified, a babe, in the lowly cave to lie; is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? I wept for the sorrows and pains of men, I healed them, and helped them, and loved them - but then, they shouted against me - "Crucify!" Is it nothing to you? Behold me and see: pierced through and through with countless sorrows - and all is for you; for you I suffer, for you I die, is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Oh! Men and women, your deeds of shame, your sins without reason and number and name; I bear them all on the cross on high; is it nothing to you? Is it nothing to you that I bow my head? And nothing to you that my blood is shed? O perishing souls to you I cry, Is it nothing to you? O come unto me - by the woes I have borne, by the dreadful scourge, and the crown of thorns, by these, I implore you to hear my cry, Is it nothing to you? O come unto me - this awful price, redemption's tremendous sacrifice - is paid for you. Oh. Why will ye die O come unto me.

CHRIST COMES WITH A CROSS! He is glorified in his person because as the Son of God he possesses all the glory of God, but the greatest glory of his work as the Messiah King is not his power displayed in miracles—it is his sacrifice displayed in his cross. By his cross he made atonement for sin, thereby overcoming the power of death and opening the way for his resurrection and ours. Amen