

Easter Sunrise Salado

1 April 2018

“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (John 12:23).

From the beginning of John’s Gospel there are several references to Jesus’ hour. For example, at Cana in Galilee, Jesus told his mother, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come” (John 2:4). Again, later in chapter seven there are two references to Jesus and his time of fulfillment. First, Jesus said to them, “My time has not yet come, but your time is always here” (John 7:6), and second when “they tried to arrest him, [but] no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come” (John 7:30).

In yet another reference to the element of time, Jesus “spoke these words while he was teaching in the treasury of the temple, but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come” (John 8:20). In each of these instances, readers wonder, “when will Jesus’ hour or time come?” We find the answer in our morning’s lesson: 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” (12:20-23).

“The coming of the Gentiles [Greeks] is so theologically important that the writer never tells us if they got to see Jesus, and indeed they disappear from the scene in much the same manner that Nicodemus slipped out of sight in chapter three” (Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, The Anchor Bible Series: Volume 29, Doubleday, 1966, p. 470). Perhaps the hour has come because the news of Jesus is now gone out to even the Gentiles, of whom there is scant mention in the rest of John’s Gospel. The coming of the Greeks signaled that indeed the hour has come for God to glorify Jesus. As Gerard Sloyan has put it: “In true Johannine fashion, the Christian’s hour of glory is identical with the hour of obedience, pain, and servanthood. The old adage has it, ‘No cross, no crown.’ In John, cross and crown are one” (Gerard Sloyan, *John: Interpretation Commentary Series*, John Knox Press, 1988, p. 156). When the Greeks ask to see (or believe in) Jesus, the Gospel sets the stage and Jesus’ glorified hour has arrived.

We have wanted to jump to Easter and talk about the celebration for some time and today—now—is the time! Yet we also remember Jesus’ death and burial because where there is no crucifixion then there is no resurrection. We must die in order to rise.

Dying and rising with Christ is not just a once in a lifetime experience. God regularly calls us to die to various things: ego, ambition, pride, greed, etc. Only in dying to these do we rise to joy, purpose, love, and grace.

John Calipari, the basketball coach at the University of Kentucky, said at his induction into the Hall of Fame, with dozens of former players surrounding him, that “coaching for fame and fortune is fleeting. But if you seek to further others’ aspirations and glory you become a dream fulfiller and what’s better than that” (thanks to Rob Fuquay St. Luke’s UMC, Indianapolis, IN for this quotation)?

Now believe me, as a Kansas Jayhawk basketball fan, it’s hard to relate a Kentucky coach to Jesus, but is this not the meaning of Jesus’ passion story? Is this not what makes the day we call Good Friday,

for example, good? We have a Savior so committed to our good, to our glory, that Jesus gives his life in the process. Certainly, glory is about victory, final arrival in God's presence. Entering heaven will have to be like winning the national championship, the Super Bowl, and the World Series all rolled into one, and even then, it will pale by comparison. Jesus gives his life to further our arrival in glory.

But there is still more about Good Friday that is good—and plainly helped us anticipate the joy of the Easter sunrise. Jesus redefines glory, or at least stretches its meaning. Jesus shows in his passion that glory becomes moving aside for others. Jesus spoke of his “hour,” the time of his death as glory. How odd! He shows that glory is not based alone on our arrival, victory, or reward. Glory becomes living in Jesus' example and laying ourselves down for others. We don't have to physically die to do that. There are many ways every day we can lay ourselves down to further someone else's good and gain.

Perhaps a great way to honor this day is to spend a few moments considering ways we can give glory to other people in our lives. What are ways we can lay ourselves down to lift others up?

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