

John 12:20-33 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.

Glory is found in dying

1. Seed dies to bring forth fruit
2. We die to self to bring glory to God

If you had to buy milk and eggs, would you go to a sports store? If you wanted to eat a big, juicy hamburger, would you stop by a sushi restaurant? No. A sports store is not where you find groceries and a sushi restaurant is not a place to sink your teeth into a meaty burger. What about glory? Where would you go to find glory? What would you do to get glory? The world has many ideas and suggestions on where to find glory, but our text today teaches us that we find glory in an unlikely place. Jesus teaches us today that glory is found in dying.

Jesus' heart was filled with mixed emotions. The coming of the Greeks suggested future days of a glorious kingdom. But Jesus knew that this glory would only come through suffering and death. *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. Every seed is really an embryo consisting of a root and a shoot. And inside that embryo is an "on/off" switch. When the ground is the right temperature for a certain amount of time – it's different for each kind of seed you plant – then the "on" switch is turned on. If the ground is too cold, the switch stays "off." There is also a thin coat around the seed which protects it from oxygen. But when the switch is turned "on," the embryo begins to grow, the coating is broken and it begins to send its root down and its shoot up.

Imagine a grain of wheat looking at itself and admiring its shape and color. Round and brown, it says to itself, "This philosophy I hear asking me to fall into the dark, cold ground and lose myself – I don't want to do that. I like myself just the way I am. I want to hang on to me. I want to be myself." That seed will not produce anything; it will not be good for anything.

Just as the purpose of a seed is to be buried in the ground where it can germinate and grow into something productive, Jesus wants us to know that the purpose of his coming to this world was to die and be buried. Jesus came to die to pay for our sins. But death would not be the end of Jesus. Just as a seed that is buried sprouts and grows into a fruit-bearing tree, so Jesus would come back to life and bear fruit, eternal life for all those who believe in him.

As true man, Jesus would feel every prick as the thorns pierced his head. His back would become bruised and lacerated from the scourge of the Roman soldiers. He would grow tired from the long night of beating. He would feel the searing pain of nails driven into his hands and feet. His whole body would ache and every breath would be an ordeal. But all that would be nothing compared to the torment of being forsaken by God because of our sin and its curse. It's not surprising that as Jesus contemplates such an ordeal, his heart is deeply troubled. He didn't go to his death cold and unfeeling like a robot. But he went. That's why he came.

And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. Isaiah prophesied about Jesus, "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him." (Isaiah 53:2) Notice the paradox of the cross. The one who had nothing about him to attract us to him is the one who will draw all people to himself. How? By the cross. No one could ever have imagined it. In the Roman empire there was no such thing as a cross that attracted people. The cross repelled. It was a symbol of punishment for crimes against the empire. It was reserved for the worst of the worst. A cross would turn people away in disgust or horror. But attract people?

But Jesus' cross and Jesus' death attracts the world of sinners because in that cross and that death we have the promise of life. Jesus is planting the seed of his death that will grow into millions having eternal life. So, glory is found in dying.

"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." Jesus brought the Father glory every time he humbled himself and gave of himself to serve others. Jesus would bring glory to God again by going to the cross and the Father sounded forth his "Amen" to all that Jesus was doing. Glory is found in dying.

All the spiritual life that there is in the world is the result of Christ's death. Quiet meditation or days of solitude provide no spiritual life to anyone. All spiritual life is wrapped up in death – Christ's death for us. We have spiritual life because Jesus died. We have eternal life because Jesus died. Let's not go chasing after spirituality thinking or emotionally inspiring music thinking that's how we get the Spirit. All spiritual life is the fruit of Jesus' death. And the only way we have spiritual life is by tapping into his death through Word and Sacrament. Through these means of grace, the seed of Jesus' death is planted in us and we live.

But what is that life like? Could it be that the key to life is death? Could it be that the key to living is dying? *Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.* These words of Jesus offend us. We love this life of ours. We cling to it with a passion. We devote ourselves to preserving it. We are inclined to worship the happiness, success, treasures and pleasures that we seek from this life. We don't want to lose it. We don't want to live by dying.

Not every seed that you will plant this spring will grow. That's due to the seed's coat called the testa. The harder the coat of the seed, the longer the germination process. Seeds with harder coatings make take a longer time to germinate simply because that hard coating of the seed may prevent expansion of the embryo out and the keep the water from coming in.

How hard is your coating? Life has made us hard. We have had to do it all ourselves. We don't trust anyone. We look out for number one. We don't want to die. We don't want to lose. Now many of us are saying to ourselves, I've already lost so much. What else is there for me to lose? How much more do I have to endure? How much more can I lose? You lost a husband or wife, a son or daughter. You've lost a job, your health, and even your peace of mind. You've lost some friends, your sense of purpose, your direction, and your strength to endure. Some of us have lost so much.

And yet, with all that you have lost, God wants you to know still that there is more of you to lose. The essence of the gospel-the good news of Jesus Christ- is about loss. An authentic gospel begins with loss. It begins with dying. It begins with the cross. And if the gospel that you hear preached on the radio, the television, or wherever, does not begin with a cross, if it does not begin by telling you that something in you has to die, it is not the true gospel. The true gospel is not just about you coming to Jesus as you are, it's about you being baptized in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's about you losing your former life and gaining a new life in Christ. This season is about losing. It's about loss.

Now right there many of us have a problem. We have trouble coming to church and losing something. We came to get something. We came to get a blessing-be it financial, relational, and spiritual. We came to get an encouraging word, some hope for tomorrow, and some assurance that everything is going to be all right. Many of us came to get something. We did not come to lose. No one wants to lose. (Antonio Torrence) But losing our life, we find it. Glory is found in dying.

Father, glorify your name! Jesus said. Is that what we pray when we face difficulties? We often pray for the pain, the loss, the sadness to be taken away. Instead, let's pray, *Father, glorify your name!* If God has seen fit to have you suffer chronic pain, lose a loved one, or go through some other challenge, pray that God's name will be glorified through it.

May we turn these challenges into opportunities – opportunities to show God's love in our life. We can do that when we keep in mind what God has already given to us. He has given us life, eternal life. It's a life freed from doubt and fear of death. It's a life where the burden of sin is daily lifted from our shoulders and lived in the promise of heaven.

Where do you find glory? Glory is found in dying. Jesus brought glory to the Father and to us through his death. May we, too, find glory through dying – dying to self and living for Jesus.