



SERMON TITLE: Dying to Live

DATE: May 3, 2020

SCRIPTURE: John 12:20-26

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"These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ" (John 20:31). This is how John concludes his own biography of Jesus. He wanted the young, the old, the sick, the well, the despairing, the hopeful, the skeptics, the faithful, and whoever reads his account of Jesus to believe and trust him more fully. But what did John want them to believe? He wanted them to believe that Jesus alone brought eternal life into the present, broken world. And for all who enter this eternal life with God right now, we—like John—are exiles. For all who enter a relationship with Jesus, we will very likely be marginalized and dismissed because we follow him. So, what does it mean to believe? And how do we mature in believing? What does it mean to remain faithful to God when the pressure is on? These are the things that John will help us explore by showing us the glory and beauty of Jesus.

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What do people need to see in Jesus that can make a lasting difference in their lives? What do you need to see in Jesus that can make a difference in your daily life? John 12:20-26 can help us answer these two very important questions.

We are in the final week, the final days of Jesus' life. It's Passover time and over a million people have come to Jerusalem for the feast. The city is all a buzz—the air is electric—Jesus has come riding into town on a donkey (cf. Zech9:9) and everyone praises him as the new King of Israel, the long-awaited Messiah who would crush the Romans and restore the kingdom to Israel. Then, just as today, most people care more about the political than the spiritual. They want a political, national leader who will give them everything their hearts desire. And it's at this time that John, the writer, tells us that some Greeks came to Philip, one of Jesus' disciples, asking to see Jesus. Philip is not quite sure what to do so he goes and tells Andrew and they both tell Jesus—"There are some Greeks here who are asking to see you." His reply is very strange and not on point.

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (v2e). The crowd would take that to mean, "Jesus will show us his glory by conquering our Roman oppressors and re-establishing Israel to a nation of power and greatness." Jesus seems to affirm this by referring to himself as the "Son of Man"—his favorite name for himself—which comes from the book of Daniel (chp7). In Daniel's prophecy, the "Son of Man" is the undefeatable champion of God who conquers the nations. But Jesus meant something very different by "glorified." He was thinking more in line with Daniel chp9 where we see that the "anointed one, the Messiah, will be put to death." And the next several things he says bears this out. First, he uses a farming illustration to make his point. "I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit: (v24). "But if it dies, it bears much fruit." Jesus is saying, "Just as a seed must "die" in order to give life and bear fruit—I have to die—(I have to go to the Cross)—in order for you to live and bear fruit." He's saying, "My death will bring you and many others life." And if you are a Christian, you are the fruit he's talking about right here. This is about you. And Jesus' death on the cross has borne fruit around the world for the last 2000 years.

What Jesus says next is the application to the Cross to our lives (vv25-26). "Whoever loves his life will lose it; but whoever hates his life in this world, will keep it for eternal life" (v25). To love your life means to live for yourself. To hate your life means to die to yourself. This is the key to the Christian life. This is the whole ballgame. It's why so many Christians don't experience the life he died to make possible for us. Think of it this way—the call to die is a call to grace. It's not really about what we give up; it's about what we gain. The truth is—Jesus calls us to die to what's killing us. Jesus, in grace, is rescuing us, saving us, from ourselves. Holding tightly to what I want, why I want it, when I want it—seems like it gets me the life I want, but Jesus says, "Not true. It's only by dying that you live. The Cross is not just about forgiveness and peace with God. The Cross is also a call. You let go of your life, your plan for your life, that role you want for your life—you die to all that and you give your life away to serve and follow Jesus. And BTW—this is not a one-time call—it's a lifestyle call. In Matt/Mk/Luke—Jesus puts it this way—"If anyone would come after me, he must take up his cross *daily* and follow me." That's Gospel living—living in the shadow of the Cross. Jesus is saying, "Serving me, following me is the only path to life." But sometimes, that path is painful. Life is painful and it hurts. When God allows painful times to come, it's his way of maturing us and preparing us to enter into the next season of his will for us. This is important—We do not choose pain, but we choose God's will, even if it includes pain. When God lays a pathway

of pain before us—when we take up our cross daily to follow Jesus—you can rest in this—Your life is eternal. Your serving is eternal. Your following is eternal. Your reward is eternal. You have to die in order to live.

So when they come seeking, what do people need to see in Jesus that will make a lasting difference in their lives? They need to see that Jesus does give us peace and comfort and hope in the painful times of life, but he doesn't just promise those blessings to people simply b/c they are afraid. You have to know why Jesus can give you those things. You have to know Jesus through the Cross. What you need to see when you want to see Jesus is Jesus dying on the cross for you so you can live.

And, what do you and I need to see in Jesus that will make a difference in the way we live our daily lives? What you need to see when you want to see Jesus is that following him means you must die in order to live. What are you doing with the Cross of Jesus Christ?

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#### Discussion Starters:

Here's the excerpt from Paul Tripp's book, *Dangerous Calling*. Tripp writes—"If you are ever going to be an ambassador in the hands of a God of glorious and powerful grace—you must die" "You must die to your plans for your own life. You must die to your self-focused dreams of success. You must die to your demands for comfort and ease." "You must die to your individual definition of the good life. You must die to your demands for pleasure, acclaim, prominence, and respect. You must die to your desire to be in control." "You must die to your hope for independent righteousness. You must die to your plans for others. You must die to your craving for a certain lifestyle or that particular location." "You must die to your own kingship. You must die to the pursuit of your own glory in order to take up the cause of the glory of Another. You must die to your control over your own time." "You must die to your maintenance of your reputation. You must die to having the final answer and getting your own way. You must die to your unfaltering confidence in you. [You must die to the "me-ism" inside you that will, again and again, cause you to be in the way of whatever God is doing in the moment.] You must die."

Spend some time talking about Jesus' call for us to die.

1. Which of the things that Tripp lists here hits home with you?
2. What's so difficult when it comes to denying yourself—dying to yourself—in that area?
3. How does reflecting on the Cross motivate you to surrender that area to God so that you can have life as Jesus intends for you to experience it?
4. What else?

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Discussion Starters:

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- 2.
- 3.

- 4.
- 5.
- 6.