

We Would See Jesus – John 12:20-26

Introduction – Jesus had been welcomed into Jerusalem as He rode in on a colt with palm branches and the sound of Psalm 118 in the air, *“Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!”* The crowd declared Him *“The King of Israel”* (v12). Jesus had entered Jerusalem to become king, but not king of the Old Jerusalem. His sights were much higher, much broader than that. His hour had come, and He was coming to be coronated King of the New Jerusalem with authority over all heaven and earth. The events of that week would lead to His glorification – and for those who will follow Jesus, for those who will serve Him, the *“Father will honor”* with the same glory. It is Holy Week, the week of Christ’s Passion. Will you follow Him now?

Here Come the Greeks (vv20-23) – The people thronged around Jesus because He had raised Lazarus from the dead (vv17-18) and the Pharisees worried among themselves, they couldn’t stop this growing crowd around Jesus Whom they wanted to seize and kill (11:53, 57, 12:10), *“You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!”* (12:19). In a twist of irony, John immediately records, *“Now there were certain Greeks...”* (v20). Because they came up to worship at the feast, they were most likely God-fearers, uncircumcised but reverent followers of Yahweh. Their area of worship in the temple, the court of the Gentiles, had probably been overrun by the money-changers that the Jews set up in that part of the temple. The other Gospel writers record at just this point that Jesus took up a whip of chords, overturned tables, and proclaimed, *“My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations, but you have made it a den of thieves”* (Mark 11:17). John records a similar incident but at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry (John 2:13-25) and so there is good reason to surmise that there were two cleansings, one at the beginning and a second at the height of Jesus’ earthly ministry. So in the midst of that, or right after that cleansing, certain Greeks came seeking Jesus.

Philip, Andrew, and Jesus – The Gentiles came to Philip, *“who was from Bethsaida of Galilee”* and this is no insignificant point. Bethsaida means “house of fish.” It was the home of Philip, Andrew, and Peter (John 1:44) and it was in Galilee that Jesus told his disciples to drop their nets for they were now to become *“fishers of men”* (Matt 4:19). Philip, possibly unsure of what to do (would this stir up the crowds, the Pharisees) goes to Andrew. Andrew and Philip then go tell Jesus (this is the third time Andrew brings someone to Jesus – the first was Peter and the second was the boy with the fish and bread).

“The Hour Has Come” – Jesus’ reply appears cryptic, but He is not changing the subject. He looked at the arrival of the Gentiles as a sign that it was time that *“the Son of Man should be glorified”* (v23). It had not been His hour at the wedding in Cana (John 2:4), nor at the Feast of Tabernacles (7:5), nor when He had earlier taught in the temple (8:20). The coming of the Greeks revealed that it had now come because it revealed that the Son of Man’s glory would be the coming of all nations to serve Him (Dan 7:13-14). The sign of the coming of the Son of Man with the clouds is a sign of Jesus coming to His throne in heaven at His ascension/coronation to rule all nations (Matt 28:18-20, Acts 1:9).

Glory from Cross to Crown (vv24-26) – How will this glorification occur? The seed must die, but if it dies, it will bring forth much fruit (v24). From the cross, a mighty harvest of benefit to all mankind would spring. His death, like a grain of wheat, would be the root of blessings to countless immortal souls. Christ’s vicarious death (not His miracles, not His teaching, but His death) would bring forth everlasting fruit ten thousand fold, redeeming a lost world. The thing that displayed the true glory of the Son of Man was His crucifixion, and the thing that displays the true glory of the Son of Man is the declaration of His crucifixion, His self-sacrifice in making atonement for sin. *“He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life”* (v25). This is first about Jesus, Whose humiliation resulted in His exaltation (Phil 2:8-11). Understanding this, later Jesus would say as Judas left the Passover Table to betray His Lord, *“Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him”* (John 13:31).

Follow Me (v26) – In addition, v25 is a principle extended to the followers of Jesus. What He is going to go through His followers must also go through. The exultation they all had felt with the raising of Lazarus from the grave and from the glorious Triumphant Entry like a king riding into Jerusalem made many want to “see” Jesus. But now Jesus, with His eyes focused on the hour of glory, tells them *“if anyone serves Me, let him follow Me,”* – to the cross, that is. Of course, we know that on the night of His arrest, the shepherd was struck and the sheep were scattered (Mark 14:50). Would you have followed him then? *“When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die”* – Bonhoeffer.

Following Jesus to the Cross: Dying to Sin – The cross is glorious because it declares the full debt payment for our sins. We are forgiven. The grace of God through the death of Jesus has paid it all. And when Christ bids us to die that is a gracious offer. For if you are united to Jesus, you are united to Him on the cross, in His death, and so you are not free to sin but rather freed from sin (Rom 6:1-3, 11-13). We mortify our flesh and present our lives to God. Are you stuck in yourself? Your sins, lies, lusts, laziness, covetousness, greed, grumbling and complaining, bitterness? There is only one way out. You must die.

Following Jesus to the Cross: Dying to Self – More fundamentally, we experience a death at the cross, a death to our self-centeredness. We would see Jesus, but that means coming to the cross and letting our desires for life die, our dreams and aspirations die, the way we think our story should go die, our reputation in the world die, if any of it stands in the way of our soul being with Jesus. We must hate our life compared to the surpassing glory and excellence of knowing Christ Jesus (Phil 3:7-11). Now why would we do that?

Following Jesus to the Cross: Glory – *“If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor”* (v26b). We do not aim high enough. We want to rest in the Triumphal Entry and the possibility of earthly kingship. We want a resurrection without a death because of the death. We want the crown without the cross because of the cross. Except for faith: *“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Heb 12:2). God will honor those who follow Him in this life, sometimes for a time in this life and sometimes not, but always and eternally when we are brought to heaven. The praise of God Himself over you is promised if you will follow Christ to the cross. Why would you seek the applause of this world, the fleeting pleasures of sin, the whispering lies of the devil? Die with Christ to be raised with Christ, to ascend with Christ to the right hand of the Father where there are pleasures forevermore.