

GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR HEAVENLY FATHER AND FROM OUR LORD AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST.

The text is John the twelfth chapter beginning at the twentieth verse

*Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.*

Can you imagine what it was like, Jesus entering Jerusalem. If we were here together, I would ask you to join me in the cry "**Hosanna, Hosanna, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord**". But we're not so, I'll give you a few seconds to shout it out on your own.

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Now I'm going to give a few seconds for you to think about what happened a few days later, when the cry was "crucify Him! crucify Him!"

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I wonder how many voices were raised in both cries. We are fickle beings. But we do love a parade. One does wonder who the Greeks in this story were. They were probably from out of town, but they knew about Jewish law and custom. But whatever else, it seems like they were impressed by the procession, the crowds, the triumphal entry. It must have been like being in Boston during a Super Bowl parade. So, of course, they made an attempt to find out who this hero was.

It sure seemed like Jesus was a hero, these Greeks may have even heard the word king floating around. In any case, He had to be important, very important to draw a crowd like that—so many people, so much enthusiasm.

But not everything made sense. He rode in on a donkey. The big wigs, the chief priests and Pharisees weren't there to greet him either.

Could he really be some kind of a hero? Had He won a great battle, vanquished some formidable enemy? The Greeks understood what a hero was, it was part of their culture to revere great men, especially those who suffered unjustly in the pursuit of truth and justice.

So, they sought out Jesus. It's not clear if the Greek men got to see him or not, but Jesus used the occasion to tell Andrew and Phillip at least that ***"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."*** At that point they may even have been thinking, of course, we saw the crowds, we heard the cheers. We got it made here. Note the "we", I'm sure they liked the idea of being part of the triumphal entry, they were after all Jesus' disciples. But then the twist, Jesus started to talk about death. ***"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."*** It must have seemed like a riddle at the time. But there was so much of what Jesus said that didn't make sense to them—yet.

We have the advantage of hearing that statement from this side of the Cross. So, we understand it—at least vaguely, at least superficially. We know Jesus is talking about His crucifixion, and we might be willing to stop there. In fact we must stop there because our salvation is the fruit of His death. Nothing we did, nothing we can do, takes the place of what Jesus did on the cross. **With His wounds we are healed.**

But even as we must stop there, we cannot stay there. Remember what Jesus said, **“Whoever loves his life loses it”** That’s a bit scary isn’t it? Who doesn’t love their life? Who wants to lose it?

If I’d ask these questions a month ago, you might well have had a quick, easy answer for me. But things of changed. Matters of life and death are closer to us today. Death seems a little nearer to our door—too near.

In the brief time in the Garden, Adam and Eve walked with God, and they talked with Him. Death wasn’t part of the conversation though. It didn’t have a place in the Garden. But Adam invited death in. ***Sin came into the world through that one man, and death through sin, and so death, inescapable death, spread to you and to me.*** How many generations have gone before us? They didn’t want to die but they did, because ***the wages of sin is death.***

Now the beautiful thing is that God hasn’t changed. He still wants to walk with us—with each of you—to talk with you in that cool of the day. But the debt that sin has accrued in us had to be payed, and glory to God it has been. Jesus died that you might live. And His death has already yielded an abundance of fruit.

In a different time, I would have asked you to look around and see what Jesus’ work on the Cross accomplished—the lives that now are in Him, the lives that death will not consume. If you’re not alone, do that now. If you are alone—well, you are not alone—but remember what it was, and will be, like to be together.

We could rest there, confident in the work of Christ, for His work is entirely sufficient for our salvation, but in our text Jesus went on to say, ***“whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”***

We want to live. But what is our life for? Is it for pleasure? Is it for wealth? There have been times when those things—pleasure, wealth, and other distractions—were exactly what you and I were living for, and we have seen that even when those things are gone desperate people will still cling to this life. Don't you know that we are not among those desperate ones. For us who are in Christ, we ***have*** already ***died, and*** our ***life is hidden with Christ in God.***

As sweet as this life can be, it is like road kill compared to what we have waiting for us—what Jesus went to prepare for us. We now hate those things that separated us from God, so why do we value our life here at all? Jesus told us that too. ***“If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.”***

***We are children of God,*** dearly loved children. And children imitate their parents. So we follow Jesus. It will not always be easy—it may never be easy here on earth, here in this broken world. And we serve Him. That service may be hard too, and what we do may not always seem that impressive. But we follow Jesus and serve Him as dearly loved children and we are with Him.

As we beginning Holy Week, we know It is going to be a strange one. We will not be able to be together, and yet we are together. We are the fruit of the sacrifice that Jesus made. We are the reason He suffered and died. Yes, it was because of our sin, you need to know that, but what I really want you to hear is that it was so that He could be with you. He has always longed to shelter you under His wing. He has always longed to look on your face.

Jesus went to the Cross in humiliation, from there to the grave, from there to the skies. Now we can shout ***The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation.*** Now we know that we do not need to cling to this life because our life is in Jesus and we will follow Him even to the grave, even to the skies.

Amen

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NOW MAY THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH PASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING,  
KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS IN TO  
LIFE EVERLASTING.

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