

The Seed Should Die

Հունարդ Մեռնելու է

John 12:20-50

Last week we spoke about how they made plots to kill Jesus of Nazareth. If you read chapter 12, you will see after the expression of lavish love and devotion to Jesus, they now want to kill not only Jesus, but Lazarus (poor guy, he will die twice).

I am skipping over the victorious entrance to Jerusalem (12:12-19). Let us start from v.20.

-We want to see Jesus

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. (John 12:20-22 NIV 11)

Don't you love to see the “other sheep” are already coming to see Jesus? There were Greeks who wanted to see Jesus. “Odars” are searching for Jesus. I love it. Who were these Greeks who came to the feast of Passover? These Greeks who come up to the feasts are likely “God-fearers”, gentiles who admire the Jewish faith and respect its tradition.¹

-The Hour Has Come

Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. (John 12:23 NIV11)

Please circle or underline in your Bible the statement: “**The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.**”

The hour of glorification will begin with the upper room discourse and will proceed all the way through Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and ultimately his ascension, and return to His Father.

This is the core of the gospel events, which the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Seeing Greeks here also means the ministry of Jesus is not just for the Jews, but for the whole world.

-The Seed Should Die

²⁴Very 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. ²⁵Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. (John 12:24-26 NIV)

They are going up to celebrate the Passover— a feast to remind them that God rescued them —and they will sacrifice the lamb (spill the blood of the lamb). Please notice how Jesus gives an example from the field. In an agricultural society, the metaphor of a seed that dies to give new life would be vivid in the minds of the audience. Just as the seed should die, likewise Jesus, must die in order to give LIFE to the WORLD. Also, the same rule applies to the disciples, however, in a different way. Through Jesus' death, we have life. Through the death of our sinful nature, we will find new life in Jesus. The reflection of that in the new life of the disciples is to become servant leaders in the world. It is an example of servanthood where the leader leads by serving (just like Jesus did).

-Jesus gives three reasons why he should die

"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. ²⁸Father, glorify your name!"

Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." ²⁹The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

³⁰Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. ³¹Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." ³³He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. (John 12:27-33 NIV11)

Before I give the three reasons, let me elaborate on this verse: **Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say?** (27)

Jesus' soul is troubled.

The same word was used to describe Jesus' inner soul in chapter 11 at Lazarus' death. When Jesus saw Mary and the crowd that came with her was facing the

tomb of to see him, we read **Jesus was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.**" (John 11:33)

Jesus soul was agitated, troubled, distressed.

On the one hand, he sees how fragile human beings are, we live in a broken, sinful world where death chases us. Jesus feels with our pain. On the other hand, Jesus also sees how stubborn and blinded people are. They do not to see the Messiah, and the Good news of salvation. They will die in their sins. That has been true in history and is true until today. Some will see, some will reject.

No wonder Jesus' soul is troubled.

In this passage, we find three reason why Jesus would die:

1. To glorify the Father (v 28)

Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again."

2. To defeat the enemy, the devil (v31)

Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.

3. To atone the sins of the world on the cross. (v32)

And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

Another observation about God's voice:

In the gospel we find God spoke from heaven three times.

1. In the baptism of Jesus

2. In the transfiguration event

3. In this chapter, a voice comes from heaven when Jesus asks the Father to glorify His name.

-Come and see the light

The crowd spoke up, "We have heard from the Law that the Messiah will remain forever, so how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this 'Son of Man'?"

³⁵ Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going. ³⁶ Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light." When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them. (John 12:34-36 NIV 11)

They knew that once the Messiah comes, he will liberate and will remain forever.

They are confused, how in the world The Messiah should not die.

Jesus' answer is simple: Come to the light and see.

We find again the metaphor of light and darkness. We find again walking in the darkness is dangerous; you don't know where you are going. Jesus always invites us to walk in the light; not only walking in the light following the light of Jesus, but also becoming children of light.

Once again, we see that that his own people did not believe in his word (John1:5). If you reject the light, the light will disappear from you.

John describes that after this Jesus left the scene, he literally hid himself...

-Belief and Unbelief Among the Jews

³⁷ Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. ³⁸ This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet:

“Lord, who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

³⁹ For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere:

⁴⁰ “He has blinded their eyes
and hardened their hearts,
so they can neither see with their eyes,
nor understand with their hearts,
nor turn—and I would heal them.”

⁴¹ Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him. (John 12:37-41 NIV 11)

This motif comes again and again. Some believed in the signs while others did not. Then Jesus quotes Isaiah 53. The arm of the Lord has been revealed, some see it, some don't.

Please notice, rejection of the revelation of God can result in a spiritual blindness, and therefore judgment.²

This is John's theology of the atonement.

My heart is saddened. This theme came during the blind man's miracle. The ones who think they have sight, are truly “blind”. Their spiritual eyes are blinded. By hardening their hearts, their eyes, they are blinded.

When the revelation has been rejected over and over, hearts are hardened.

I am scared of that. It is like Pharaoh's heart in Exodus. We hardened his heart over and over. In the end God hardened his heart.

Once upon a time you could (you could see, you could repent, you could turn to the Lord), now you cannot. You bring judgment on your head.

John also warns about some people who don't want to take risk of believing in Jesus:

Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved human praise more than praise from God. (John 12:42-43 NIV 11)

Watch out, like Nicodemus who loved Jesus' teaching, also talked with him. But he did not follow like the disciples.

Application:

1. Light vs Darkness:

One more time in this chapter I find the struggle between light and darkness, described in the prologue (1:1–18), now reaching a climax.

The light is shining with brilliance in the world; sometimes we don't see this. Dark forces work hard to extinguish the light, they cannot. Jesus says, "Make a choice."

"Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become children of light" (12:36).

Ask yourself, "How can I become of child of light in my community?"

2. The Seed Must Die

What a message from our Lord of the cross and resurrection. His death brought life, light.

Either you accept this or you reject. There is not middle way. Once we accept we are called to his disciples. Come and see, come and follow me.

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. (John 12:26 NIV 11)

3. The Messiah's message to the "others"

Greeks came to Philip so that he will lead them to Jesus. What if Philip said, "No Jesus is here for Jews only." Alas, for the opportunity of reaching out the world would be lost.

In the book of Acts, we find that Peter receives a vision and converts **the Roman Cornelius in Caesarea**. Peter gives a report to the leadership in Jerusalem (11:11–18), **"So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?"** (11:17).

Brothers and sisters, God was and is at work among the Gentiles (11:18).

We are called to share the Gospel of Jesus with the world, with the "other".

One of my favorite Easter worship services was in SF, 2010? An Iranian young lady from a Muslim background came to our church. She knew about Jesus from Iran. She wanted to become a follower (disciple) of Jesus. She was like a sponge reading and growing in the Word. Before Easter she came to me and asked me if I could baptize her on Easter Sunday, and she would give her testimony. I cannot forget that Easter Sunday. The “other” came and saw the light.

1. Gary M. Bruce, *NIV Application Commentary* p343
2. Dr. Mark Bailey, Dallas Theological Seminary, online course, Gospel of John

Additional reading

“But for those who choose to remain in the darkness, Jesus has strange words of new challenge and warning. He hasn’t come to judge the world. He has come to save it. He has come because God loved the world so much that he didn’t send a lowly subordinate; he didn’t send a long-distance message; he didn’t leave a note in the hope that someone would find it. He loved the world so much that he came in person, in the person of his own son, the **Word** made flesh, so that he could save the world in person. That was and is what Jesus is all about.”
(P40 N.T. Wright)