

[READ John 12:20-26] Pray...

Before I get into the short text, may I give you a quick background to this event?

- The Greeks = not necessarily from Greece. NT - word "Greek" = "Gentile" .... non-Jew; there is simply 'us' and 'them' ...Jew & Greek.
- The feast = Passover....Jesus' last Passover....this is the week of His death.
- The fact there were gentiles who 'went up' to worship at the feast was not unusual.

Although most gentiles were pagans, not all were. Some had rejected pagan polytheism and had embraced the more rational and more holy monotheism of the Jews. These Greeks may have been fledged converts to Judaism or they may have been what is commonly called "God-fearers" and worshiped God in the manner allowed for them.

- Passover is in Jerusalem. The Bible always speaks of "going up" to Jerusalem because it is in the hills. So here – they "**went up** to worship." ...

This event of the Greeks wanting to see Jesus is **unique** to John....

..... the other three gospels don't record it.

And there are a few events that the other gospels record during this time that John doesn't.

Matthew, Mark, and John –are called the 'synoptic' gospels because they 'look alike' all record the triumphal entry....and – right after that – the synoptics all record the cleansing of the temple. Jesus must have done that multiple times; John records one in Chap. 2

Interesting what Jesus says as he chased the money changers out of what would have been the Outer Court...we call it the court of the gentiles. Quoting verses from Isaiah & Jeremiah Jesus says: "***My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers.***"

There are commentators who speculate that those words may have helped motivate these gentiles to make their request. They may have approached Andrew and Phillip because they both have Greek-sounding names and they are both from Bethsaida on the northeast corner of the Sea of Galilee and pretty much in Gentile territory. It's very possible that this group may not have lived relatively nearby.

So some Greeks come to Phillip and say "***Sir, we wish to see Jesus.***" Phillip gets Andrew and together they tell Jesus. As I prayed before...***I trust this is our desire as well...we want to see Jesus. Not with our physical eyes, I know – in this life we want to see Him with the eyes of our inner man....our spiritual eyes. That's why we're here this morning, isn't it? I hope so. I hope we're here not just to see our friends, but to see our Savior...to see our God.***

- It is the task of the preacher to **exalt** Jesus up before us...to **magnify Him**...to **attempt to bring glory to Him in our thoughts and in our desires.**
- It is the task of the congregation to be active listeners...to **put away thoughts** of all the things we have to do and the things that scream for our attention....to **focus** on Him....and to **think through** what is being proclaimed.....It's not easy work but "**....we wish to see Jesus.**"

Okay... first...Look at the paragraphs right before this. Jesus has made a very visible entrance ...people are throwing down palm branches...shouting Hosanna....but look at v.19:

***So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."***

Now –as usual – when the Bible uses the word “WORLD” it doesn’t mean everybody in the world. Its **hyperbole**...they’re **exaggerating to make a point**. Many times the Bible uses language the way we use it...sort of casually...not with technical precision.

In this case, ‘world’ simply = “**a lot of people**” are following him.,,,,,

**BUT NOTE** what John is highlighting:

>>> on one hand you have the **Pharisees who have rejected him** and – if you look back at 11:53 – you’ll see they want him dead.

>>> **On the other hand...as if on cue**, the next words John writes = some Greeks who are seeking Jesus

In a way, **they represent “the world”**. So we see two things going on here, right?

John is contrasting this rejection **BY** the Jews with the Gentiles who are seeking Him.

***It helps us to understand Jesus’ somewhat strange response.***

***"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."*** This is ***kind of an unusual thing*** to say in response to ‘some Gentiles want to see you’, isn’t it?

But not unlike Him....Jesus always seems to answer the question no one is asking....

We’re familiar with all the times John tells us that His hour has not yet come.....

- Right at the beginning at the gospel...at the wedding in Cana...Jesus said to his mother, ***"...what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come."***
- On a previous trip to Jerusalem – when they had first determined to kill him - John tells us, ***"So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come."***
- In chapter eight, after giving the affirmation that He is the light of the world, John writes, ***"These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come."***

**So the question is: why do these events** – Jesus’ rejection BY the Jews and these Greeks seeking Him – act as a sort of trigger for Him to say that now **“The hour has come ....”**

It reminds me of the signal God gave John the Baptist at the beginning of the gospel...John said **“I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'”**

So now here with Jesus and these Greeks...**It sounds as if He were waiting for this moment ...but why...**how do these **two things signal the hour** He is to be glorified?

The “hour” of course is not a literal 60 minutes but simply means a short period of time.

**The hour of His glory is the hour of His death....**His sacrificial death on the **cross not only paves the way for His return to the glory** He had with the Father, but also brings Him **honor** and **praise** and **glory** in and of itself

There is another event that happened at this same time recorded in all three synoptic gospels:

Jesus speaks a **parable** that Matthew, Mark & Luke all tell us about.

It does help me understand what’s going on here in our passage.

It tells us in **parabolic form** what is being pictured for us in **narrative form** here.

**Parable of the tenants...**I trust you remember it. A landowner plants a vineyard and leases it out to tenants. When the time comes to collect fruit, he sends one servant after another and then he sends his son. The tenants kill them all including the son.

The imagery is pretty simple: the landowner is God, the servants are the prophets, his son is Jesus, and the tenants are the Jews.

So the parable ends with this question: Jesus asks, [ **MATT. 21 : 40 – 43** ]

I want to highlight the **reciprocal rejection** going on here; Jesus says to the Pharisees - because the builders have rejected the stone, **Therefore** I tell you - you are rejected.... *the kingdom of God will be taken away from you **and** given to a people producing its fruits.*

When I say that – **PLEASE** – do not think that I am thinking **universally and without exception.**

Not every Jew is rejected and certainly not every Gentile is elected.

In Romans 9, 10, & 11 Paul makes it clear that in every generation there is a remnant among Jews who are elect and called. ....**But as a nation** they have been **blinded & hardened.**

**Remarkable thing...and deadly serious.**

When speaking of this very thing in that same Romans passage, Paul says, **“Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness.”**

**VERY IMPORTANT:** I'm not saying this just to affirm this theological camp over that theological camp...I'll leave that discussion for 'Theology Thursdays'...

**I'm saying this because it glorifies Jesus....and THAT is what is so incredible!**

Both Him bringing salvation to the Gentiles **AND** this reciprocal rejection BY the Jews and then OF the Jews...**all this rebounds to His glory!**

**Do you remember how Paul ends that passage in Romans ....?**

Listen: *"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!.....For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."*

ONE LAST THING ABOUT THIS....**in that parable about the tenants.....**when Jesus speaks about the stone being rejected he is quoting Psalm 118....

Let me read a small part of that for you: ***"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."***

When we quote that verse we mean that ***every day is the day the Lord has made...***

Maybe so, but in context, the psalmist is speaking of the day the cornerstone was rejected by the builders... the cross ..... His death ... ***This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."***

It is a marvel, isn't it?      Unsearchable AND Inscrutable.

**Let's go back to our John passage.....[ JOHN 12: 24 – 26 ]**

In verse 24, Jesus affirms this great principle...this great truth. In verses 25 & 26, He applies this truth to us, but in verse 24 it has particular application to Jesus Christ and to Him alone.

The **ESV** translates the Greek **"amen, amen"** as **"Truly, truly"**....I admit, whenever I see that in scriptures, I do take special notice....but I think **that's why** Jesus uses it.....

..... **highlighting** what He is about to say and **underlining the truthfulness and sobriety** of it.

Jesus is pointing to His death....and **the necessity** of it: He **MUST** die in order to bear fruit....

In this case, the "much fruit" that it bears is the salvation of all those whom the Father has given Him.

In logic class you call this a “**necessary condition**”: the only way we can be saved is that He has to die. We **can’t be saved** by following His example, we can’t be saved by good deeds, we can’t be saved by knowing correct doctrine....**ALL THESE THINGS SHOULD COME....BUT** > >the only thing that saves us is the death of Jesus Christ....and the **means by which we are tethered to that death is faith**.

Just prior to Jesus coming to Jerusalem = Lazarus & the Jews plot. Look back at [11:45 -53]

Both the apostle John and Caiaphas understand that Jesus’ death is substitutionary....  
...of course, Caiaphas is thinking purely on a political level, but John realizes the far, far deeper truth that He is the Lamb of God and (as He says in Revelation) “...[Rev 5:9b-10]

I know we frequently quote those verses because they highlight what Jesus Christ accomplished by His death.

We less frequently highlight what our response should be....it immediately follows: [vs: 11-14]

#### **This is our God and our Savior Jesus Christ.**

Would that we could catch a **greater glimpse** of Who He truly is and what He has accomplished ....and that this sense of adoration and worship would overwhelm us.

Okay.... John 12: verse 25 : ***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.***

Let me make three quick observations about verse 25:

Before > first that this **love/hate contrast is an idiom** and is meant reveal our fundamental preferences....it does **NOT mean “hatred” in an absolute sense**.

- Ok...first...I said that in verse 24 the death of Jesus is a necessary condition for the salvation of man. verse 25 may not use the word “unless”, but it is certainly stating a **necessary condition in absolute terms**. The person who “loves his life loses it” ...it couldn’t be any other way, right? An **idolatrous focus on self is the very heart of sin**. A person like that brings about their own condemnation.
- Second...you know that Jesus has given instruction like this before. Again – this is recorded in each of the synoptic gospels – but let me read you a verse of two from Mark 8....and by the way, this immediately follows Jesus predicting His death like here in John....” ***If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.*** “

- Lastly, the ESV translation correctly shows the **contrast** between “life in this world” and “eternal life”, but in the Greek text that contrast is further highlighted by the two different words he uses for “life” Life “in this world” is denoted by the word **psyche** which (according to the lexicons I looked at) means "life" in two chief respects: the natural life and "the seat of personality" ...we may call it the EGO. Eternal life use the word “**zoe**”.... life as a principle in the absolute sense. When Jesus said, “I am come so that they might have life...” OR “...whoever believes in me has eternal life” OR...”it is the Spirit who gives life”...in every case - and many others - he uses the word “**zoe**”.

Verse 26 ***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.***

**This is a promise and is intended to motivate us to hate our life in this world.**

When I read these words, I am impressed by two things: ***First – the promise....if we serve Him, if we follow Him,*** we will be **with Him in His glory and the Father will honor us....**

Of course, if that hadn’t had been written in God’s word, we would **NEVER dare** to say such a thing....but it has and these promises is intended to put courage in us ..... motivate us....

**to relatively – hate our life in this world compared to eternal life.**

When I think of the Father honoring us, my mind goes to two statements in Matthew 25: the first is the parable of the talents. You know the parable, there are some receive honor: ***“The master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’”***

Immediately following that parable in Matthew 25, Jesus **teaches** about the **separation** of the sheep and the goats on judgment day. The **sheep receive honor: ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”**

**I want to hear those words someday....I know that you do too....**

..... the **necessary condition for us to receive this honor is to serve Him.**

The **second** thing I wonder about is, **specifically** – how can I serve Him?

I know there is a sense in which every Christian in this room would like to serve Jesus ....but how?

Well – in the **context of Matthew 25, when the honor is given and the commendations are bestowed,** there are **specific ways** we can serve.

In the parable of the talents, it is **those who makes use of his or her gifts for the benefit of God’s kingdom who is honored.** It is referred to as being **“faithful over a little” ...using what God has given us...whatever it is...**

.....**And I believe that ties into what comes next.**

In the teaching of the sheep and the goats, Jesus gets very specific.

***For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ... naked and you clothed me, ...sick and you visited me, ... in prison and you came to me.'***

You know the story...then the sheep said to him, "Lord...when did we do any of these things?"

***"And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'"***

That's a remarkable thing, isn't it... ***whatever you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.***

Let's not be like the Priest and the Levite who cross the road so they don't come into contact with the needy It's so easy to arrange our lives so that we never see the poor and the desperate....and even to pretend we don't see that in the church.

We want to be among those who hear:

***'Well done, good and faithful servant. ...Enter into the joy of your master.'***