

John 12:20-50
Isaiah 52
Psalm 2

“The Hour Has Come”

August 9, 2020

Isaiah 52 speaks of the return from exile – and even more so –
the return of the LORD to Zion!

In other words, this is all about the restoration of the glory of Jerusalem!
The glory of the LORD that had appeared to Isaiah in the temple in Isaiah 6
would depart from the temple in the exile.

And now Isaiah says that the LORD himself will bring salvation to Zion!

But how?

That’s where the end of chapter 52 brings in the suffering servant.
Chapter 53 opens with the words,
“Who has believed what he has heard from us?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?”

John will quote this in John 12 – after the Triumphal Entry.

John is saying that Jesus is the one who brings Israel home from captivity!
Jesus is the one who reveals the glory of God!

But Isaiah had already caught a glimpse of how God’s glory would be revealed.
While chapter 52 speaks of the beautiful feet of him who brings good news,
chapter 53 says that he had no beauty that we should desire him.

The glory and beauty of God are seen most clearly in the cross –
where the eternal Son of God died in our place.

Crucifixion is gruesome.

And in order to get Jesus to the cross, you have to have betrayal (by Judas),
abandonment (by his disciples),
all sorts of political machinations (by Pilate, Herod, and the priests).

It’s ugly. It’s grotesque. It’s not the way anything should be!

But it is where the wisdom, and power, and beauty of God are revealed.

If you want to see the glory of God – look at the cross of Jesus!

Our Psalm of response reminds us of the political machinations of the rulers of the earth –
and assures us that in the end they cannot succeed.

When you are tempted to get cynical and discouraged about our political situation –

sing Psalm 2.
Oh, sure, they might wind up crucifying the Son of God!
But they cannot succeed!

Sing Psalm 2
Read John 12:20-50

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God.
All things were made through him,
and without him was not anything made that was made.
In him was life, and the life was the light of men.
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
He came as a witness to bear witness about the light,
that all might believe through him.
He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.
He was in the world, and the world was made through him,
yet the world did not know him.
He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.
But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name,
he gave the right to become children of God, who were born,
not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man,
but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory,
glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

This is what John's gospel is all about.
In the resurrection of Lazarus in chapter 11 Jesus reveals his glory,
and now in chapter 12 all the world follows him.
The crowds hail him as the Son of David in the triumphal entry,
even the Greeks wish to see Jesus.
All the world has gone after him!

- 1. The Hour Has Come (20-36)**
 - a. "Sir, We Wish to See Jesus": Glory and Death (v20-26)**

²⁰ Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. ²¹ So these came to

Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”²² Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.²³ And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.²⁴ 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.²⁵ Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.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.

When the Greeks say “Sir, we wish to see Jesus,”

Jesus answers: “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified”

The hour has come.

All of history has been preparing for this one moment.

But this hour is not what his disciples have been expecting.

So Jesus says,

“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.”

The only route to life is through death.

The only path to glory is the suffering of the cross.

And Jesus insists that this is true for us as well as for himself.

The faithful servant looks like his master.

Martin Luther once distinguished between a theology of glory and a theology of the cross.

A theology of glory starts with our assumptions about what God *must be like* –
with the result that we wind up with a God who looks very much like us!

The theology of the cross starts by hearing God’s own revelation

And where do you hear God’s revelation?

In the bible? Yes.

But preeminently in the incarnation of the Word –
preeminently in the Cross.

If you want to know what God is like – look at Jesus – look at the cross.

Because in Jesus, the Word became flesh – God himself took our form.

As Luther put it once:

“He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering.”

Listen to that line again:

“He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering.”

“God can be found only in suffering and the cross.”

You are never going to find God through strength – through power –

through wisdom – through trying harder – through doing better...

The only way to find God is through suffering – through the cross.

That's what Jesus is saying in verse 25.

“Whoever loves his life loses it,
and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”

If you want to follow Jesus – then you need to be where he is –
and that means that you follow him to the cross!

b. “When I Am Lifted Up”: Glory and the Cross (v27-33)

²⁷ “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” ²⁹ The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” ³⁰ Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³ He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

Having said this, Jesus says “Now is my soul troubled,
and what shall I say? ‘Father save me from this hour’?
But for this purpose I have come to this hour.”
Jesus knows why he has come.
He knows what is coming next.
It is time for him to die.
And yet this troubles him.
Jesus did not enjoy the thought of dying.
But yet he knew the purposes of God—he knew why he had come.
And so in humble submission, he says, “Father, glorify your name.”

Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”
Some thought that an angel had spoken—but others just thought it thundered.
Jesus says, however, that this voice came not for his sake, but for ours.

The hour has come.
Now is the judgment of this world;
now will the ruler of this world be cast out.

What is Jesus talking about?

How is this the “judgment of the world”?

The prophets had said that at the end of history God would judge the world,
vindicating his people Israel, and destroying the wicked.

The death of Jesus was the judgment of the world.

Because in the death of Jesus, the Son of God took our death.

But Jesus also says “Now will the ruler of this world be cast out.”
 Why is Satan called “the ruler of this world?”
 Adam was created by God to rule over the creation.
 He was God’s vicegerent.
 God gave him dominion over all creatures.
 But rather than rule as the steward of God,
 Adam yielded his lordship to the serpent.
 Through deceit, Satan gained the overlordship of the human race.
 With humanity under his power,
 the devil became “the ruler of this world.”
 In Genesis 3, God promised Eve that her seed would crush the head of the serpent.
 Through the seed of the woman,
 God would restore humanity to rule at his right hand.
 And when you look at the history of the Son of God in the Old Testament,
 this royal theme is at the very center.
 Israel was called the Son of God, and was declared a kingdom of priests,
 the holy nation in which the rule of God would be established once again.
 And from within that holy nation, God called the son of David to be his son.
 The kingdom of God would be established wherever the Son of David reigned.
 The Psalms are full of this theme:
 “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.
 The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness....
 Therefore, God, your God, has anointed you
 with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.” (Ps 45)
 “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.
 Ask of me and I will make the nations your heritage,
 and the ends of the earth your possession.” (Ps 2)
 “And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.
 My steadfast love I will keep for him forever,
 and my covenant will stand firm for him.
 I will establish his offspring forever
 and his throne as the days of the heavens.” (Ps 89)
 And in the law of Moses and the reign of David,
 the kingdom of God was revealed in a picture.

But now the hour has come.

Now is the judgment of this world.

Now will the ruler of this world be cast out.

Jesus referred to this event in Luke 10:18.

When the seventy-two returned from their preaching mission,
 rejoicing that even the demons were subject to them in Jesus’ name,
 Jesus said: “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”

Did you ever wonder what the point of casting out demons was?

This is it.

Jesus and his disciples healed the sick and cast out demons
as signs of what Jesus came to do.

He came to heal humanity from sin and death
–therefore he healed the sick.

He came to cast out the ruler of this world through his death
–therefore he “practiced” by casting out demons in his life.

But how could Jesus “cast out” the ruler of this world?

Satan had a rightful claim to his authority.

He may have obtained it through deceit,

but no descendent of Adam could challenge him for the throne.

Until now.

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

But how will the Son of Man be glorified?

Was it through the voice from heaven?

For a voice from heaven proclaimed “I have glorified it and I will glorify it again.”

But Jesus immediately said, no that voice was not for me.

That was for you.

No the way in which the Son of Man is glorified is by being lifted up.

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

Now, if this statement was left without explanation,

you might think that it referred to the resurrection and ascension.

After all, it is at the resurrection and ascension that Christ is lifted up, right?

But John says that “He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.”

How is the Son of Man glorified?

Through the cross.

I’ve been telling you all through John’s gospel that John sees the cross
as the glorification of Jesus.

Here’s why.

Jesus himself said it.

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

That hour comes at the cross.

If Jesus is lifted up on the cross,
then he will draw all people to himself.

Jesus has spent the whole gospel of John driving people away.

He has no interest in drawing crowds to himself.

But now he reveals why.

He cannot succeed at casting out the ruler of this world

through gaining popularity with the crowds.
A military campaign will accomplish nothing against the evil one.
The only way for Jesus to bring the judgment of God against the world,
is for him to bring it against himself.
He must go to the cross.

c. “While You Have the Light, Believe in the Light, so that You May Become Sons of Light” (v34-36a)

³⁴ So the crowd answered him, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” ³⁵ So Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. ³⁶ While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.”

How will you respond to this glory?

The people respond by saying

“we have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever.

How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up?

Who is this Son of Man?”

What a minute, Jesus!

We’ve got our hopes pinned on you!

The Messiah is supposed to stay with us.

How can you talk about dying?

Jesus replies by turning their focus away from the future and onto himself (35-36)

Darkness is coming.

They may not understand all that happens,

but if they believe in Jesus, then they will be able to endure the coming darkness.

“In him was life, and that life was the light of the world.”

When you believe in Jesus, you become children of light.

Jesus himself *is* the light.

You and I are *not* the light.

We are the children of light.

But then Jesus hides himself from them.

He knows that he cannot create true disciples through his signs.

There is no point in trying to persuade and convince them,

because the problem is not intellectual.

This is what Isaiah had spoken of in Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 6. (38-41)

2. Faith and Judgment (36b-50)

a. “They Could Not Believe”: What Glory Do You Love? (v36b-43)

When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. ³⁷ Though he had done

so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, ³⁸ so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

*“Lord, who has believed what he heard from us,
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”*

³⁹ *Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said,*

⁴⁰ *“He has blinded their eyes
and hardened their heart,
lest they see with their eyes,
and understand with their heart, and turn,
and I would heal them.”*

⁴¹ *Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. ⁴² Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.*

Isaiah saw his glory and spoke of him.

Who?

Jesus?

Yes.

In Isaiah 6, Isaiah saw the glory of the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah saw the glory of Jesus in that moment.

In Isaiah 53, Isaiah saw the glory of the suffering servant.

Isaiah saw the glory of Jesus in that moment as well.

This is foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews,
but we preach Christ and him crucified.

And yet some could not help but believe.

As Jesus has told us before,

no one can come to me unless the Father draws him.

And some—even of the authorities believed in him,

but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it,

so that they would not be put out of the synagogue;

for they loved the glory that comes from man

more than the glory that comes from God.

These are in a dangerous halfway stance.

They believe—and that is good!

But they still love the glory of man more than the glory of God.

In the end, this halfway stance will relapse into unbelief,

because while they believe in the light,

they refuse to walk in the light.

b. “Whoever Believes”: Seeing Jesus Is Seeing the Father (v44-46)

⁴⁴ *And Jesus cried out and said, “Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent*

me. ⁴⁵ *And whoever sees me sees him who sent me.* ⁴⁶ *I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.*

Jesus cried out (44-46).

If you see Jesus, you see the Father.

If you believe in Jesus, you believe in the Father.

Jesus has come into the world as light.

He is the light of the world!

The one who believes in Jesus may not remain in darkness!

And Jesus concludes this section by saying:

c. “The One Who Rejects Me”: Jesus Came Not to Judge the World But to Save the World (v47-50)

⁴⁷ *If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.* ⁴⁸ *The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.* ⁴⁹ *For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak.* ⁵⁰ *And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.”*

At first this sounds strange.

On the one hand, Jesus says:

“If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.”

but then he says:

“The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.”

What is Jesus saying?

To put it simply,

the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

He must go to the cross, where he will be lifted up for the salvation of the world.

He will bear the penalty that man deserved.

He will become the Son of David, the new Israel, the last Adam, the new humanity.

So no, there is no need for Jesus to judge anyone.

The one who rejects Jesus has rejected humanity.

The unbeliever is the ultimate misanthrope.

Jesus has come to save the world.

The world is saved through him.

Anyone who refuses to believe his word has stated plainly

that he does not want to participate in the new creation.

So, if you do not want to be part of humanity – if you want to share in life eternal –
you don't have to.

Jesus will let you continue in your misery forever.

Jesus is the Son of God who speaks the words of his Father.

We must hear him, and receive his word,
because his commandment is eternal life.