

SCRIPTURE READINGS AND SERMON

Palm Sunday

April 10, 2022

Psalm 118:19–29 (ESV):

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the LORD.

20 This is the gate of the LORD;
the righteous shall enter through it.

21 I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.

22 The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.

23 This is the LORD's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.

24 This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

25 Save us, we pray, O LORD!
O LORD, we pray, give us success!

26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!
We bless you from the house of the LORD.

27 The LORD is God,
and he has made his light to shine upon us.
Bind the festal sacrifice with cords,
up to the horns of the altar!

28 You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;
you are my God; I will extol you.

29 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever!

1st Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 32:36–39 (ESV):

36 For the LORD will vindicate his people
and have compassion on his servants,
when he sees that their power is gone
and there is none remaining, bond or free.

37 Then he will say, 'Where are their gods,
the rock in which they took refuge,

38 who ate the fat of their sacrifices
and drank the wine of their drink offering?

Let them rise up and help you;
let them be your protection!

39 " 'See now that I, even I, am he,
and there is no god beside me;

I kill and I make alive;
I wound and I heal;

and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.

EPISTLE: Philippians 2:5–11 (ESV):

5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Gospel: John 12:20–43 (ESV):

Some Greeks Seek Jesus

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.

The Son of Man Must Be Lifted Up

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. **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."

The Unbelief of the People

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.

Sermon 15 – Palm Sunday

“Glory Kill”

John 12:20-36

Dear friends,

Big changes are afoot in this Gospel lesson, and its kind of a big Gospel lesson too, so we might not go through all of it today. It's hard to know what to focus on here. Is it the random Greeks who ask to see Jesus, whereupon Jesus derails so hard that these Greeks are suddenly forgotten about? That sounds like fun but there's not much to say on it. Should we talk about the metaphors Jesus uses, the grain of wheat falling on the ground and dying, bearing fruit? We know that without Jesus we bear no fruit. We know that Jesus' death is the start of it. Might get to that a little bit, but I want to talk about one

of the recurring words in this text. Glory. Jesus talks several times about His glory, and if there's any backbone to this text, if there's any kind of recurring theme, this is it.

Palm Sunday has just happened, Jesus is in Jerusalem now, He is standing on the precipice ready to take the plunge. He is committed, the cross is going to happen in like a week now, and this bothers Him but He's ready to do it. In the Gospels Jesus can be random at times, He can switch topics, He can use things that are happening as kind of a springboard to talk about what He wants to talk about, but this time is different. Jesus is now laser-focused on the cross, He knows this is His destiny and everything He says from now on is about that crucifixion, what it means, and that this is deliberate. The deliberate part seems kind of silly to us now, but understand that despite repeated warnings the disciples still manage to be utterly blindsided by the crucifixion. They were told to expect this, but it still comes as a horrible shock to them. That might explain Jesus' focus here.

Passover is happening, and Passover is a big deal, and at Passover are men from every nation under heaven. Not just Jews by blood, but also Jews by faith, people of other bloodlines brought into Judaism just as God intended. Among those are some Greeks, they ask to see Jesus, and Jesus proceeds to completely ignore them to say this: **“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”**

When I think of glory I do not think of death, but that is exactly what Jesus is talking about. He is talking about His death on the cross. Understand please how foreign this is, not just to us, but to the people listening. Ancient people were a little more comfortable with the idea of a glorious death than we are, admittedly, but it had to be the right kind of death. Typically, it had to be death in battle. When you said “glorious death” to people back then that's typically what they pictured. You know, a warrior who goes down fighting for his people, a hero's death, that kinda thing. They did *not* at all picture a death on a cross. In fact, being crucified was considered a deeply shameful kind of death. It was reserved for criminals and those that failed spectacularly. You weren't on a cross unless you had done something wrong, and now everyone gets to see you die for your wrong. Most victims were naked, exposing you to everyone's ridicule. So that is part of what's going on in how crazy it sounds that Jesus says He's about to be glorified by this action.

What is glory on earth is shame in heaven, and what is shame on earth is glory in heaven. I wouldn't say that as a hard-and-fast rule, but is the case far more often than not. The priorities we have, the things we glorify, are not the right things, and we do not glorify the things that we should. This is because sin twists what we consider good, what we consider just, and what we consider glorious. Jesus shows us what is truly glorious. Not death, there is nothing glorious about death by itself, but about the purpose behind that death. **“23 And Jesus answered them, 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.”**

A plant analogy is kind of a weird way to talk about the crucifixion, but Jesus uses it. A seed has to die to do its job, and Jesus describes Himself and His work as that seed for us. Jesus' death catalyst that will bring forth our new life. His death, our life. That is glorious for us, we know we're getting the better end of that deal, but it is also glorious for God. Why? Because it demonstrates who God is perfectly, it demonstrates God's heart and soul perfectly. God has always wanted us to see Him as the God who sacrifices for His people, the God willing to put His money where His mouth is. He did one better than that, He put His own blood where His mouth is, sacrificing His Son, who He loved, to save us. God takes pride in winning us back, He takes pride in changing our hearts, changing our essence, fixing our problems of sin and all the corruption that sin brings. God loves to bring His people back and loves to make them His people. That's what He wants you to see in Him.

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.” Glory in this hour, yet that glory has a personal cost to Jesus. That is an interesting dynamic to me. This is glorious for God, but not exactly fun for Jesus. I think there's a lesson in that for us. Glory comes from duty, it comes from purpose, it doesn't come from how it feels. This isn't a glorious experience for Jesus, it is a glorious mission, and He will endure whatever

He has to in order to ensure that mission is carried out. Being childish as I am, I often forget that. I always end up thinking if the purpose is good, that good purpose will somehow make it easier, or feel better. Jesus reminds us that sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes, we must do things that are simply awful to experience in order to accomplish something good. Jesus understands the mission comes first, and thank God He did, because His mission is our salvation.

What does God the Father mean when He says that He will glorify it again? There are a few possibilities. When Christ is glorified on the cross, when He is lifted up in death like that, He causes us to believe in Him and we glorify the Father's name. So God will glorify His name by making us glorify it, if that makes sense. And here we are, doing just that. Honoring Christ's sacrifice by hearing His Word and singing His Word and all the other things we do. That's awesome, because you and I wouldn't glorify God any other way, we can't, we're too full of sin, we need to be changed, and Jesus has done just that. God will also glorify His name when He sends Jesus to return. When Jesus comes back, this will accomplish the other half of God's mission that He hasn't yet accomplished, by destroying this world and sin for good, by shackling the devil and his angels into the lake of fire, and by taking us away to live in the New World with Him forever. What does that have to do with His name? God has promised He will do this. God has staked His reputation on keeping that promise, and so when He does, He will prove again that God is true to His Word, that God is here to rescue His people, not destroy them, and so on.

So we're awaiting that glory of God's name, even as we bear that glory. There's things to do now, here. We praise God, we receive His gifts, we share His forgiveness and talk about Him. These things glorify His name. But we also wait for God to return, hope for that day, not getting too fond of things here on this earth. This glorifies God too, because it shows that we're holding true to His promise. We always think we have to do something to give glory to God. Jesus shows us differently. We believe Him and trust Him, that is how we give glory to God. **“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.” If Jesus is the light, and He is, John started his Gospel with those words, then we believe and that is enough for God.

Death isn't glorious, but death can yield some glorious results, particularly when that death is God's death. God hates death, how can He glory in it? Because He goes to His death to glorify us. So it isn't about death at all, dear friends. It is about us. We are God's prize, and He does all this to win us. Just think of how amazing that is. God goes through all this difficulty, He endures all this wickedness, He suffers a slow and painful death, and at the end of it all, He smiles and thinks: It was all worth it. Mission accomplished. Why? Because I saved you.

Amen.