

John 12: 20-43 “The Hour Has Come”

March 20, 2016

Today we have crowd funding where you put your need and your plea out there on the internet and hope people will respond. We have waves of friends and followers. We tweet and twitter and follow on Facebook. Everybody is interested in everybody else for some reason.

What about your interest in Jesus? Where does it come from? It would seem as if Jesus has been able to draw quite a crowd. He has just raised Lazarus from the dead. He rode triumphantly into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. His miracles and teachings have aroused attention. Jesus could heal the sick and bring life to the dead. He has power to spare. Now even the Gentiles are interested and they want to be introduced to Him. They want to talk to Jesus. With everything that has happened, who wouldn't be interested in Jesus? Who wouldn't be drawn to what He can do for us? He's come to bring the kingdom of God into our midst and so far it looks pretty good. His election campaign is on an upswing.

Where do you suppose the disciples' excitement level is about this time? They have suffered through the lean times, ministering in the backwater towns of Galilee. They have suffered through the times of opposition. Now, they think, things are going to change! Their numbers are up. There will be recognition, power, and status. Things are really going to start happening for the kingdom of God. Things are finally starting to look up, sort of like watching the stock market gains on a good day.

In the midst of all this hype and excitement, Jesus pours out a strong dose of reality. Everyone wants to meet Jesus on a high note when His popularity is surging. But that's not the way it is. If you want to be introduced to Jesus you have to meet Him at the cross. If you want to follow Him, reject the life that seeks satisfaction without Him. In Matthew 16:24-25, Jesus told His disciples,

“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 will find it.”

So, are you still interested? It's very easy to live for now and to focus on this life and its lures and attractions. The average one hour television show has more than fourteen minutes of commercials. Most of them are either for cars you can't afford or for fast food that you shouldn't eat. It's no wonder that we are so quickly drawn to all the temptations that this life has to offer. Following Jesus means hard choices . . . deny yourself. It means taking time and energy away from all the other things that draw us away from God. Serving, being obedient, and doing God's will doesn't sound very appealing. So if this is what the call to follow Jesus really means, are you still interested?

In the midst of this outpouring of excitement, a group of Greek Gentiles are curious and want to see Jesus. Kind of makes you want to ask the Evangelism board to look into this. How can we tap into this kind of excitement? How can those outside of Christ's church be brought to meet Him today? And when they come, they will need someone to introduce them to Jesus, someone like Philip or Andrew. The circle of followers is truly meant to become wider. Jesus is glorified as the nations are brought into the kingdom of God and He invites you and me to have a part in bringing them.

I was reminded of that this week. On Thursday the whole world turned green and paused to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. You know, the patron saint of green beer. At least that's what people think when you mention St. Patrick. How little do people understand this remarkable Christian missionary? Patrick was born somewhere around 389 AD in present day Britain and taken captive to Ireland as a young man. He

escaped captivity and went back to Britain but eventually returned to the land of his captivity to preach the gospel to his former enemies and captors. You might think . . . you might be inclined to want to leave your former enemies in the dark about faith and salvation, and let them just go to hell, but not Patrick. Like St. Paul before him, whose heart ached for his fellow Jews who had rejected the Christ, Patrick could not be silent about the blessing of salvation that the Lord had so kindly bestowed on him. The Gospel had lit a fire in him that he could not contain.

Here's part of his legacy: *This is how we can repay such blessings, when our lives change and we come to know God, to praise and bear witness to His great wonders before every nation under heaven. This is because there is no other God, nor will there ever be, nor was there ever, except God the Father. He is the one who was not begotten, the One without a beginning, the One from whom all beginnings come, the One who holds all things in being - this is our teaching.*

And His son, Jesus Christ, whom we testify has always been, since before the beginning of this age, with the Father in a spiritual way. He was begotten in an indescribable way before every beginning. Everything we can see and everything beyond our sight was made through Him. He became a human being and, having overcome death, was welcomed to the heavens to the Father. The Father gave Him all power over every being, both heavenly and earthly and beneath the earth. Let every tongue confess that Jesus Christ, in whom we believe and whom we await to come back to us in the near future, is Lord and God.

He is judge of the living and of the dead. He rewards every person according to their deeds. He has generously poured on us the Holy Spirit, the gift and promise of immortality, who makes believers and those who listen to be children of God and co-heirs with Christ. This is the one we acknowledge and adore, one god in a trinity of the sacred name.

Jesus came to bring the Gentiles into the kingdom, but that's only part of the answer. For anyone to come into the kingdom of God, the cross of Calvary had to happen. There is no glory without the cross, without the suffering and death. Unless he dies to make satisfaction for sin, there is no fruit, there are none saved, there is no glory. Jesus is glorified in bringing many to salvation. In the pages of Scripture that recount the events of this holy week, we will see the point of climax for all of history. It is the point of Judgment. It is the point of the defeat of the devil, the point that will draw people to salvation. It is the hour that will change eternity.

Do you know what attracts people to Christianity? Some people try and use the ways of the world to grow the church. If you want to grow the church, you have to meet people's felt needs. But for the church to be the church there is only one mission, to help people meet Jesus and follow Him. The mission of the church is to bring people to that focal point of all of history, to bring them to the cross. What does Jesus say here about the Christian life? The Christian life is about walking the way of the cross. It is all about following Jesus and being where He is. You need to be eternally minded and eternally focused. Did you know that too much love of this life and this world can have fatal consequences? The things of the flesh and the pursuit of lust can shorten our days here and we lose eternity in the process.

One day a rich man came to Jesus and asked what he had to do to get eternal life. Jesus took him first to the commandments and listed all the requirements of the law. All these I have kept. What do I still lack? Jesus said, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell everything you have and give it to the poor, then come

and follow me.” The young man went away sad because he was rich. He loved this life and this world and his riches too much. Never mind the other commandments, he had not kept the first one!

In our text today, these Greeks want to come and see Jesus but it is not enough just to see Him. We must follow Him to the cross. We must give Him our sins. We must take, by faith, the forgiveness and eternal life that He secures for us. Then, as His followers, we should seek to be where He is. So, where is He? First of all, He is here in His father’s house. Remember the story of when Jesus was twelve and His parents brought Him to Jerusalem? When it was time to go home they thought He was with friends so they travelled a whole day before they realized that He was not with them. They went back to Jerusalem and searched for Him for three days until they found Him. They finally found Him in the temple. Did you ever wonder where they looked before they thought of looking there? Was there a first century equivalent of a 7-11, or a shopping mall where they could have looked for Jesus? Maybe they thought He was out behind the high school.

Where do people look for God today? Where do people look for answers to life’s problems? Where do people look for peace and security? Where do people look for nearness to God? They look to false teachers and false prophets. They look inside and try to find some inner spirituality. They try and define some higher power from deep inside or from the world around them. They look in all the wrong places. If you want to see Jesus, if you want to find Jesus, you can do that right here in His house. Christ is where His church is. Christ is where His sacraments are.

Jesus’ hour has come and what does He say? “My heart is troubled.” The Gentiles have been drawn to Him. Should not His soul be pleased? So why is Jesus sorrowful? The suffering and agony is beginning as Jesus makes Himself the offering for the sins of the world. All throughout His travels around Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, it is as if He has been collecting the garbage, collecting the sins of god’s people to carry them to the cross. But that’s only half the load He will carry to the cross. As these Gentiles come, they bring the other half of the delivery. It is the combined weight of the sins of the world that is the reason for the sorrow and the agony. He will bear the punishment for all of it.

Why? What drives Him? Hebrews 12:2 says that it was for the joy set before Him that He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Jesus had said twice before that His hour had not yet come. Now it has! What is to happen now? Now is the time for judgment, the text says. Greek uses the word *crisis*. It is decision time. When the music in the movie reaches its height, you know the climax is coming. So here in our text, even as the nations are brought to Jesus, it is the critical hour upon which hangs life and death for all of humanity.

You are in the emergency room at the hospital. The patient there on the bed is in critical condition, wounded, and bleeding. The next hours will decide whether the patient lives or dies. This hour in our text is also critical because it is the point of dividing. Jesus is coming to the cross and now you can begin to see its shadow looming large. Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles. The cross will be the point of dividing between believer and unbeliever, between those who are saved and those who are lost.

This hour is the most important one in all of history. It is the point of salvation. It is here at the cross where Christ stands between a righteous God and a guilty world as a sacrifice for sin. His life is the sacrificial payment for the sins of the world. When he hung on the cross to be judged and iniquity laid upon Him, and He was wounded for our transgressions, it was, as it were, the judgment upon this world

that came crashing down. But know this . . . here an everlasting righteousness was brought in, not for Jews only, but the whole world. This hour is judgment and condemnation against the powers of darkness. Here's what you need to see . . . *now* is the prince of this world cast out. Jesus will die on the cross, and the devil will be condemned and cast out by means of it. Here is the assurance of the victory over Satan. It is as good as done and even when Jesus yields to death He triumphs over it.

When our kids were little we had a family homework project to do. We had to design a game based on the book called "The Borrowers". The Borrowers were little creatures who lived in various parts of this big old house. They were called borrowers because they would borrow what they needed from the full-size people who lived there. So, as we designed the game, we put secret passageways in the house, secret routes from one room to the other so that the tiny borrowers could get where they needed to go and still avoid the humans who lived there and the dangers they presented.

Jesus has opened a new secret passage for us to get to heaven. He has opened access for us to come to God now with our prayers and deeds that we might freely receive what we need for life from Him. The entrance to this new and secret way is at an unexpected place. The entrance is marked by a cross on a hill called Calvary. The exit is not far away but it too is at an unusual place, a grave opening carved into the side of a hill. We might call it the *road to glory* because through the cross and empty tomb, Jesus travelled the road to glory. Here Jesus opened a new way to glory, a new way to heaven for us. Sin and Satan and death had blocked the way. They had separated us from God and from heaven but there's good news in our text today. "Now the prince of this world will be driven out." By His death and resurrection Jesus destroyed death and the power of the devil. Satan no longer rules. He cannot claim us as his because Jesus rules. Of the devil we can say, "He can harm us none, he's judged, the deed is done. One little word can fell him."

Jesus has opened a new way, a way around the blockade of sin and death. Through Baptism we also died with Christ and are raised with Him to a new life. "The hour has come," Jesus says, "for the road to glory to be opened." The hour has come for the seed to die and to produce many seeds. The hour has come for Satan to be defeated and cast out. The hour had come for God's salvation for sinners to be revealed. The hour has come for glory.