

John 12:20-43

April 9, 2017

The hour has come. The appointed time has come. Zero hour has arrived. How does that make you feel? You and your wife have been expecting a baby, and the hour has come. You've been on the kidney transplant list for four years when the phone rings ... we have a donor for you ... the hour has come.

Four months ago we sang a song that went like this, "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus..." Four months ago we read these words from St. Paul, "When the time had fully come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law." The hour had come and the angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest."

What has been happening since then, not the 4 months, but 33 years? John the Baptist burst on the scene announcing that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. He called people to repent and believe the good news. After His temptation in the wilderness, Jesus came to Nazareth where He had been brought up. When they came to the synagogue the people invited Him to read the Scriptures. He chose this one:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour"

Jesus has gathered His disciples around Him in order to teach them and prepare them for the work He will pass on to them. He has been making disciples of them. They will soon go and make disciples of others so that the telling of the good news could go on to the next generation and could also go out to the nations. What you see unfold in the gospels is not aimless wandering, but a purposeful mission. Jesus comes to take on the devil. He comes to free those enslaved by sin. He comes to rescue the captives. He comes to cast out demons, to heal and to cure, to confront all the terrible consequences that sin has brought upon humankind, to bind up the broken-hearted, and to gather the lost sheep wherever they may be.

Not too many weeks ago we sat with Peter, James, and John on the Mountain of Transfiguration and saw the glory of God in the face of Christ. We heard the voice of God from the cloud telling us, "This is my Son, whom I love ... listen to Him." We listened as Jesus and Moses and Elijah discussed the mission, the new exodus that Jesus would accomplish at Jerusalem. In the first exodus, Moses delivered the people from bondage in Egypt and put them on the path back home to the Promised Land. Elijah was sent to rescue the people from an idolatry that threatened their very survival. Now Jesus would set His face to Jerusalem and finish the mission and bring the children of God home to heaven.

Our text picks up in John 12 at the point of the Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem. A great crowd had come to Jerusalem for the Passover and they heard that Jesus was on His way into the city. They took palm branches and went out to meet Him, shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" As they were doing this, Jesus was riding into the city on a young donkey, with His disciples following after Him. So the parade coming in meets the parade going out and they join together with one voice, "Hosanna! Praise the Lord who comes to save us!"

What you need to see here today is a definite agenda, a mission and a plan that started long ago in the heart of God when mankind first sinned. From the beginning of time, from before the beginning of time, the Father determined that He would send His one and only Son to die for the sins of the world. From before the beginning of time Jesus was willing to make Himself nothing. He would take on the form of a servant and be born in the likeness of men. He would humble Himself and become obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Now the Son of Man will be glorified, but how? He will die, and when He does, He will bear much fruit. He will die and as He does, the ruler of this world will be cast out. Jesus will be lifted up and He will draw all people to Himself.

Interesting timing in our text today that you need to notice. Some Greeks had come to Jerusalem for the Passover, not Jews, but Gentile converts. That is significant. In John 4, Jesus had to go through Samaria. He had to meet the woman at the well. She wasn't a Jew. In Acts 8, Philip was led by the Spirit to share the faith with the Ethiopian Eunuch who wanted to know about the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. In Acts 10, Peter had to go to the house of

Cornelius, a Gentile who wanted to know more about Jesus. Time and again we see the heart of God. We see the intent of God and we see the plan of God. What do we see? The heart of God *loves the world* and is willing to give His one and only Son so that those who believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. The intent and plan of God is for Jesus to die for the sins *of the world*.

So what happens here as our text begins? We see that the outward pressure of the growth of the kingdom of God is about spill over to the Gentiles. If you just read the text, and don't look at the context, take a look at what you would miss. As the Pharisees watched the Palm Sunday Parade unfold, they were filled with contempt at what they saw. They saw the pressure of the growth of the Jesus' followers building to the breaking point.

"This is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him."

They were right. In the very next verse some Greeks, some Gentiles, came up to Philip and said, "We want to see Jesus too." The growth of the kingdom had reached the critical breaking point. So it begins! In nuclear physics it's called "critical mass." Jesus says, "The hour has come." The critical mass of the kingdom has burst forth and now even the Gentiles are here. The hour has come. The seed of the woman will crush the serpent, and the serpent will bruise his heel. The hour has come. Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it again. The hour has come. The Lamb of God will carry away the sin of the world. The hour has come and the road to glory will begin at a cross on a hill called Calvary. That road will lead us to another unusual place. It will lead us to a tomb carved into the side of a hill. It is called, "the road to glory" because through the cross and the empty tomb, Jesus is travelling the road to glory. By means of that road, He will open a new way to heaven for lost sinners. Sin and Satan and death had blocked the way. Sin and Satan had separated us from God and from heaven.

"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 avalanche of sin and death that blocked the way. "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.

There's map for that road in our service today. It is based on the clear words of Scripture. It is called the Nicene Creed. It describes the steps along the road that Jesus took to glory. Jesus came down from heaven, incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary. He was made man. He was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. The third day He rose again and ascended into heaven, and He sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come back with glory. The hour has come for Jesus to walk this road to glory by way of the cross. He did it in order to bring us to glory. He did it for you and for your salvation.

In the verses that precede our text today, the Pharisees had their own reasons that Jesus should die. It is better that one man die than the nation perish. Pilate has his own reasons too. Keep order and peace, keep his own job. But that is not what is at the heart of Jesus' suffering and death. It is not fate that sends Him to the cross. It is not a tragic accident of history. It is not the lesser of two evils as Chief Priest would predict. It is the love of God for a broken world. It is the plan of God for the salvation of sinners. The prophet Jeremiah prophesied that the time would come when the road to glory would be opened. Here now, in our text, Jesus says, "The time has come."

So, why is His heart troubled? The Gentiles have been drawn to Him, should not His soul be pleased? Why is Jesus so sorrowful? Why this sudden shift of gears? It is because when the time comes, the agony also begins in earnest. This is the day when the Passover lambs are selected to die. This is the day when Jesus sets Himself up to be the offering for the sins of the world. All throughout His travels around Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and Galilee, it is as if Jesus 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. Today, as these Gentiles come, they bring the other half of the load. And this newly-combined weight of the sins of the world is the reason for the sorrow and the agony. He will bear the punishment of all.

What drives Jesus? Why does He continue on this road? 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. What is to come in this Holy Week is painful beyond description but what will follow? What Jesus will accomplish will be glorious beyond imagination! Jesus had said twice before that His hour had not yet come. Now it has! What is to happen now? He says, "Now is the time for judgment." The Greek uses the word "crisis." It is crisis time, decision time, win or lose time. You know you have reached the climax when the music in the movie reaches its height. So here in our text, even as the nations are coming to Jesus, it is the critical hour upon which hangs life and death for all of humanity.

Imagine yourself 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 the critical point. It is the point of dividing, all or nothing, win or lose. Jesus is coming to the cross, and now for the first time you can 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 the sacrifice for sin. His life is about to be the sacrificial payment for all our breaking of God's law.

When Jesus was judged, and iniquity laid upon Him, it was for us. When He was wounded it was for our transgressions, and the punishment due this world fell on Him. He takes up the judgement of God and gives you the everlasting righteousness that is your salvation. This hour is judgment and condemnation against the powers of darkness. The prince of this world will be cast out. Jesus will suffer and die on the cross, and the devil will be condemned by means of it. The victory over Satan is done. Jesus yields to death and in the same instant He will triumph over it. And you will be saved! Thanks be to God!