

Hebrews 5:5-10, John 12:20-33

The results of the survey completed by the congregation show that we have a healthy church. Most of us have a positive appreciation of church life. Despite the difficult times we have faced during the last year we praise the Lord that the church is here and is thriving. In such a diverse congregation it is expected that there are some different hopes and dreams for the future.

You are now preparing for the appointment of a new permanent Pastor. We are all praying for God's guidance and continued growth in the congregation.

In his gospel St John does not set out to repeat the information which the other Gospel writers had already recorded. He makes a choice of the events and conversations from the life of Jesus which he knows from experience will help people see and understand the truth about who Jesus is and knowing that to come to a living faith in Him (20:31).

Today's gospel reading is the only event John chose to record between Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, on Palm Sunday, and the Last Supper on Thursday evening.

John must have thought it was important.

Greeks came looking for Jesus.

When the NT mentions "Greeks" it does not necessarily mean people from Greece but Gentiles. Greek speaking people from the pagan world.

Many of these "Greeks" in the first century rejected the myths of the Greek & Roman Gods. They were attracted to Judaism's worship of one God and attended worship in synagogues throughout the Roman Empire. These particular "Greeks" had come to Jerusalem and wanted to meet Jesus.

When Jesus was told that Greeks were asking to meet him he said, "The hour has come for the son of man to be glorified."

What was important and significant about Greeks coming to Jesus?

Jesus had come to Jerusalem already knowing that it was a one way journey. He knew what he had come to do; He had come to die.

John's Gospel has already told us twice that the authorities had tried to arrest Jesus but couldn't as **Jesus' hour** had not yet come.

John is not referring to the time of day but to an Hour, a time, a special significant moment.

There are significant times in the lives of individuals and of churches when there are opportunities for change and movement -

"There's a time for every purpose under Heaven".

[Ecclesiastes 3:1]

The coming of the Greeks signalled to Jesus that **His time** had come. It was a fulfilment of OT prophecy that the nations would come to honour the Messiah. Jesus declared,

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

At first it seemed almost as if Jesus was not going to deal with the request of the Greeks to meet him.

First Jesus focuses on what it means that **the hour** has come.

Jesus uses a parable of a Grain of wheat -

Only when the grain of wheat falls into the ground will it bear fruit - seed dies shoot new life → many Jesus is the grain of wheat; In a mysterious way Jesus' death will lead to life for many.

Jesus applied the same principle to us His followers with a deep wisdom from the OT books of Proverbs & Ecclesiastes written at least in part by Solomon.

King Solomon, the son of King David, Ruled Israel and an empire. He was powerful, he had amazing wealth, a vast harem of beautiful women and numerous children. He was famous for the breadth of his knowledge and wisdom.

Solomon was a builder. He built the Temple in Jerusalem. He built palaces. He built houses. He laid out gardens and parks.

He had vast estates of farms with crops & animals. But he concludes in Ecclesiastes [2:11, 18],

**"I considered all that my hands had done.
All was vanity & striving after wind... seeing that
I must leave it to the man who will come after
me."** His achievements were empty for him
because in the end he knew that he would die.

**You can't take anything with you when you die.
There are no pockets in shroud.**

What are our ambitions in life?
Are we looking for power, prestige, respect.
Is our priority to gain wealth and the luxury,
distraction and security it brings? Do we use our
time in the search for long life or happiness?

We cannot know what tomorrow will bring.
We can't see the future. Our life is only lent to us.

We can't keep ourselves.

Only by trusting ourselves to God's loving care and
offering ourselves to serve Him can we have
confidence for today and for eternity.

Jesus expresses this truth in Hyperbole.
Deliberate Exaggeration was a commonly used way
of speaking at that time. He said;

**"The man who loves his life will lose it,
while the man who hates his life in this world
will keep it for eternal life." V25**

As Jesus' followers we need to learn to let go of our
selfish-centred lifestyle. To love the Lord our God
with all our heart & our neighbour as ourselves.
Jesus is not speaking of self-hate but hating self-
centredness.

Jesus taught those who were troubled by worries:

**Seek first the Kingdom of God
and His righteousness and all these things
will be given to you as well. [Matt 6:33].**

Jesus is calling his disciples to follow him in a life of
service to God and to others. V26

**"Whoever serves me must follow me and
where I am, my servant also will be.**

My Father will honour the one who serves me."

At the end of our passage (v32) Jesus answers the
question "Will he meet those Greeks?" He says;

**"When I am lifted up from the earth,
I will draw all men to myself."**

This was his answer.

The Gospel was for all people not just for the Jews.

Jesus knew the horror of what was coming and it troubled him deeply.

The phrase **lifted up** was used to describe exalting a person to be King - glorified [v32].

The same phrase was used to describe lifting a person up on a cross to shame & slow painful death.

The true God, the God of astonishingly generous love, shows his glory not by raw power or dazzling display but by self-giving love. Jesus' glory is seen throughout His life but most fully in the Cross. His death would look like a tragedy but it would come to be seen as his crowning glory and the triumph of God's love.

Jesus had come to save His people from their sins and the only way he could do that was by offering his own perfect life as a ransom for us.

At the point, where the forces of evil - human and demonic - were determined to frustrate God's plan

of Salvation. They did their worst to expose Jesus as a fraud, to humiliate him, to blacken his name, to kill and wipe him from the face of the earth.

But at that very point when evil was at its greatest Jesus by his self-giving love defeated the powers of evil. He broke the power of Sin and death and set the prisoners free.

This happened at Passover. At the first Passover Moses led the People of Israel out of Egypt and set them free from slavery to Pharaoh.

As John who wrote John's Gospel stood with Mary Jesus' mother watching Jesus die on the Cross. It seemed to anyone watching that those who denied God's rule in the world, who had laid it waste, who trampled the poor and who had exalted themselves as Kings and gods were winning.

But while Jesus hung dying on the cross an unseen battle was taking place in the Spiritual Realm.

The power of self-giving love won over the power of Sin and death. The victory was not seen until three days later when Jesus rose from the dead.

Jesus' hour had come as the climax of God's plan to ransom his people. He set the captives free from the power of Sin, free from the curse of the law and free to live for God.

Jesus gives us the model to follow, He said,

"I have come down from heaven, not to do my will but to do the will of Him who sent me"

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus had already warned his disciples that to follow would be costly. He had already called them to take up their cross and follow Him. [John 6:38].

The kind of commitment to self-giving love, which Jesus modelled and asks us to follow could not be demanded by an OT type of law code. The response Jesus asks for from us can only be given when our hearts have been touched by the love of God for us.

Trusting Jesus as Lord, serving Him as our King, allowing him to be captain of the ship of our life is the way of Christian discipleship.

When we put our trust in the Lord Jesus he sets us free to serve. In a congregation each member plays their part to make the church what it is. The Lord our God calls us to a new vocation a life of service, giving our life away, taking up our cross, like a seed falling into the ground, giving up its life so it can bear fruit. We give up our lives to worship and serve the Lord our God, to serve our brothers and sisters, and to serve our family and our neighbours.

PRAYER

We thank you Father for leading us to repentance and faith. You ransom, heal, restore and forgive us. You have made new life possible for us as your children, as citizens of the Kingdom of heaven living under your law of love.

Help us day by day to see you more clearly, love you more dearly and follow you more nearly. Amen