

We are returning to our study in John. Chapter 12 told of us of the extravagant act of worship by Mary as she poured that costly perfume on Jesus' feet and head, anointing Him for burial. (Matthew 26:7) We learned that the God fearing Greeks were seeking Jesus, and that Jesus then shared the analogy of the kernel of wheat. It has to be buried before it can multiply.

Commented [notes1]: 7 a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. Matt 26:7 (NIV)

Before the gospel of the kingdom could go out into the Gentile world, Jesus had to be planted. Why? Because for the Word to go out into the world in a way that it could be received, it needed faithful messengers to deliver it. For the messengers to convey the message correctly, they needed the power of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:8) The Holy Spirit cannot inhabit dirty vessels. It took the death of Jesus bearing our sins on the cross to make us clean vessels before God, vessels fit to receive the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:19) It took Jesus exchanging His righteousness for our sins to make us suitable containers for the Spirit. (Ephesians 4:24)

Commented [notes2]: 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8 (NIV)

Can you see the connection with the Greeks seeking Him and Jesus' seed analogy? The Word for the world needs sanctified vessels that could only be made ready through the death and resurrection of Jesus. (2Corinthians 3:6) That flows then right into the next thought. If Jesus had to do that to save the world, it is no wonder He said, ²⁷ "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. What is the reason to which Jesus is referring? It was the reason of dying for us that the world might be saved, that those Greeks who were seeking Him might have hope. (Titus 3:7)

Commented [notes3]: 19 by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. Romans 15:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Eph 4:24 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant--not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 2 Cor 3:6 (NIV)

Recognizing what must take place didn't make it any easier to do. If you think Jesus didn't have a hard time with this, think again. He knew what it meant to exchange His righteousness for our sins so much more clearly than we can understand what that entailed. He realized the horror of sin that we often take lightly. If we saw sin for what it really is and where it leads, really saw it as God sees it, we wouldn't want to be anywhere close to sin of any kind as if it were the plague. Jesus could see it clearly and was about to take not just my sin and yours, but the sins of all mankind upon Himself. (1John 2:2) No wonder His heart was troubled. No wonder He wanted to be saved from the hour of this momentous exchange. (Mark 14:36)

Commented [notes6]: 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:7 (NIV)

Jesus was not here just to enjoy life and teach us how to be good. He had one purpose. He lived to glorify the Father by obeying His voice and yielding His life as a servant. (Philippians 2:7) When the burden of what faced Him troubled His heart, He reminded Himself of why He had come. ²⁸ "Father, glorify your name!" He had come to glorify the name of the Father by making this exchange. He had come to reveal the Father's great love for us. Revealing God's heart is glorifying His name. We have no greater revelation of the heart of God than the cross, where Jesus took our sins and gave us His righteousness.

Commented [notes7]: 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 36 "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." Mark 14:36 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. Phil 2:7 (NIV)

*Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again."
²⁹ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. God spoke audibly now for the third time in Jesus' ministry, the*

baptism (Matthew 3:17), the transfiguration (Matthew 17:5), and now shortly before the arrest and crucifixion. God had glorified His name in the life of Jesus. When we see Jesus' mercy and grace, we see the heart of God and therefore the name of God is glorified. When we see Jesus put evil in its place, we see the heart of God and the name of God is glorified. And at the time of this passage God was about to glorify His name again in the death and resurrection of Jesus. There we see the heart of God so clearly. We see sin meeting its just punishment. We see mercy and grace as we are allowed to place our sins there. (Psalm 85:10) We see faithfulness and righteousness as Jesus walks forth from the tomb. God had indeed glorified His name in the life of Jesus and was about to glorify it again.

³⁰ Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Jesus had the faith and conviction to know the Father would help Him finish His task. (Psalm 22:24) He didn't need the assurance of the voice from heaven. We are the ones that benefit from it, us who wonder if God will help us through to the end. It was for us who wonder if our lives could possibly glorify God. If you wonder if you will finish strong and bring glory to His name, then it is for your benefit. (Philippians 1:6)

Will you take it personally? You have to have not only the ears to hear but a heart to receive as well. That is why many did not understand what was said. But for you who do have a heart to hear and receive, He has glorified His name in your life and He will! The fact that you desire to glorify His name shows that He is at work in you and will finish what He started.

³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. This is a troubling passage unless we understand how John sees events in the present as having an ultimate fulfillment. Remember John's similar application in the verses that follow his most famous, 3:16. "He who does not believe is condemned already." (John 3:18) This does not mean that they are suffering the agonies of hell and that they will never face a future judgment before the throne of God. It means that their current actions result in a final outcome.

The same is true with this verse. Because Jesus will judge the world's sin by going to the cross and taking on our sins and defeating death and hell, Satan "will be driven out." Jesus' current actions will result in a final outcome. His current actions establish a future result. Satan is thrown out of lives and the kingdom of God is established in believers as they are filled with the Holy Spirit. He is dethroned in the life of everyone who is led by the Spirit. He will be thrown out of this earth when the kingdoms of men become the kingdom of our God. The present reality of the cross results in the future complete expulsion of Satan. (Revelation 20:2)

For John, the cross is the dividing line in history. On one side is Satan buffeting God's creation and only a few prophetic words of the hope of God's future intervention. On the other is victorious Jesus whose selfless act has defeated our enemy, freeing us from the fear of Satan's power (Hebrews 2:15) and pouring out His Holy Spirit to indwell all who will come to receive Him. (John 14:23)

Commented [notes10]: 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."
Matt 3:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: 5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"
Matt 17:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 10 Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.
Psalms 85:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 10 Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.
Psalms 85:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.
Phil 1:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.
John 3:18 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.
Rev 20:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.
Heb 2:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: 23 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."
John 14:23 (NIV)

Though we are talking about the ultimate reality of what was happening, we must remember this is in the context of the Greeks seeking Jesus. The next verse brings us back to that focus. ³² *But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.* Jesus was probably referring to the beginning of one of Isaiah's suffering servant songs. It begins in Isaiah 52:13 (NIV) ¹³ *See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.* It goes on to tell of the brutality of the cross and of a savior who will bear our sins and heal us. It concludes with Him sharing with us the spoils of the victory that will be His through this suffering. It is perhaps one of the clearest and most detailed passages about the work of Jesus written some 700 years before our passage in John.

Jesus' statement fits very clearly with the imagery of crucifixion. The victim was laid on the ground and nailed to the crossbeam. He was then raised up and lifted up onto the post that held the crossbeam. The imagery was clear to the people as the next verse indicates. ³³ *He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.* The language was also clear to those who studied the prophets.

What is very unusual is that Jesus saw this coming death as drawing the Greeks and the entire Gentile world to Him. The Apostle Paul saw how strange this was when he wrote, ²³ *but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles...* 1Corinthians 1:23 (NIV) Jews weren't looking for a Savior to die for them. They wanted one that would kill their enemies. Greeks saw gods as too lofty to enter into the pain and suffering of men. Their God might make *you* suffer, but suffer for you? No way! That would seem to Greeks as weakness. In the next verse, the Apostle addresses what Jesus was getting at. ²⁴ *but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.* 1Corinthians 1:23 (NIV) God will open the heart of the true seeker to see that the cross is both the power and wisdom of God. There, the love of God was so clearly displayed that we cannot help but be drawn. Only the hardhearted could resist a love that would go to that extent for them. (Romans 5:8)

Even now it's working. That unfathomable love that is just and righteous, yet merciful and loving. Its cords are going out to you as you hear this. How could God love us to that extent? Why would He want to draw us into fellowship with the holy Trinity? It is so gracious and loving that we tend to guard our hearts against taking it all in. That's because we know it would elicit a response like Mary's earlier in the chapter. So we just open ourselves a bit to the amazing thought that God could so love us and we are drawn (once we choose to believe), irresistibly, powerfully, humbly near that place of torment, the cross. We are drawn because it displayed more love than we could dream of or hope for in our deepest longings. (Song of Songs 8:7)

The prophetic indication threw the crowd for a loop though. They were looking for King David part 2. ³⁴ *The crowd spoke up, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say, "The Son of Man must be lifted up"? Who is this 'Son of Man'?"* It's true. Isaiah said the Messiah would reign on David's throne and over his kingdom forever. (Isaiah 9:6-7) But later in Isaiah he wrote of

Commented [notes19]: 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 7 Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned. Song 8:7 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. Isaiah 9:6-7 (NIV)

the suffering servant. That is why the crowd wanted Jesus to explain the apparent contradiction. Who is the one that does all this suffering?

They wanted the 2nd Coming to be the 1st Coming. They would have switched the order in which God fulfilled the prophecies. They were ready for a new king that would build back up the glory of the nation of Israel. As is often the case, instead of trying to correct their misunderstandings, Jesus moves on to what is the most important thing at hand. A theological debate would have gotten them nowhere and it really does for us either. What they needed right then and there was to open themselves to truth. They needed a willingness to hear and receive, and maybe that is where some of you are this morning.

³⁵ Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Jesus declared Himself to be the Light of the World earlier in His ministry. (John 9:5) John saw Him as light coming into the world to illuminate everyone's way. (John 1:9) Jesus was saying that His time with them was about up. They needed to open their hearts now and receive what He was teaching them, not try to enter into debates. The God given opportunity was there. Don't ignore the pleadings of God. If you're sitting down with someone who is the world's leading authority on something, you don't waste their time and yours by debating them on some point of which you know very little. Jesus is the man from heaven. (John 6:38) He is only there a few more days. Listen up while you have the chance!

The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Without the light of Jesus we just stumble around. We can't discern right from wrong or truth from error. We have no real direction. Jesus comes and illuminates our world and shows where real danger is and where real value is. We have direction and purpose.

³⁶ Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light." When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them. After Jesus was no longer among them it would be harder to believe. Persecution by the Jewish leaders would cause some to think twice. This was their opportunity to connect with Jesus in a way that we who have lived since just dream about.

The tide was turning. Public sentiment was shifting. Jesus wasn't gathering an army and He wasn't saying anything against Rome. It was all spiritual talk and gloomy predictions. The crowds were rejecting His message. Jesus hid Himself. He doesn't want us to be accountable for rejecting more and more truth.

³⁷ Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. ³⁸ This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: "Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" What would it take? How could anyone do more, how could they expect more? The words of the prophets were coming to pass.

³⁹ For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: ⁴⁰ "He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their

Commented [notes22]: 5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." John 9:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.[John 1:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: 38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. John 6:38 (NIV)

eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn--and I would heal them." Lest we take this on its own and adhere to strict Calvinist dogma, that they had no choice in the matter, that they were destined to unbelief, note the following verses that declare that many believed.

There is not an easy answer to the sovereignty of God and the free will of men. The human mind would like three bullet points that makes it all understandable. We don't particularly enjoy a mystery when it comes to theology, but that is what it is. God promised to harden Pharaoh's heart, but a careful look at the text shows Pharaoh hardened his own heart first. (Exodus 7:23; 8:15) Many of those listening to Jesus hardened their own hearts first. John does not teach that we are automatons just doing what God has pre-programmed us to do. He clearly teaches that we are all drawn to Jesus, all illuminated by Jesus, grace enables all, and all are free to decide. (John 10:9)

⁴¹ *Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him.* Isaiah clearly saw and predicted the wonder of the Savior dying for us. Other prophets did as well. They caught glimpses of what was to come and wondered about the details wishing they could live in the time their visions would come to pass. (1Peter 1:10-11)

⁴² *Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue;* ⁴³ *for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.* Secret believers know they are witnessing the truth and yet cling to being accepted. The text clearly tells us why. They are more concerned about what man thinks than what God thinks. What a hindrance this love for the praise of man can be! It's a desire to be accepted and honored. It's the flesh wanting to take preeminence over the spirit. It's the refusal to be that kernel of wheat that dies to bring abundance.

Pastor Frank has been playing in some local bands to connect with the music community. He told of one time when one of the other band members whispered to him, "I'm a Christian too." In other words, "I believe but I value the respect of my friends more than I value the love of my Savior." I guess you could be born again and say something like that, but you couldn't live comfortably with it for long. This power of the cross draws those who believe. It draws us to die with Jesus. The more we let ourselves take a real look at the depth of His love, the harder it becomes to try to live in that world of compromise. We start to burn to be honest about whose we are. Finally we must speak out and declare our love for the One that was lifted up for us.

Our passage began with Jesus' decision to be rejected and murdered to save those Greeks that represent the lost world. What was His motivation? It was to show us God's heart, which is longing to bring us into a relationship with Him, filling us with His Spirit. The passage ends with the world deciding they won't stand up for Jesus and an honest report of their motivation, the praise of man. Our hearts are evil. These are the two great motivating factors in our world, the glory of God and the glory of self. Which is motivating you? That is light in a dark world. Will you receive it?

Commented [notes25]: 22 But the Egyptian magicians did the same things by their secret arts, and Pharaoh's heart became hard; he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said. Ex 7:22 (NIV)

Commented [notes26]: 15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said. Ex 8:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. John 10:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: 10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 1 Peter 1:10-11 (NIV)