

²⁰ Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” ²² Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

²³ Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

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. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!”

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.

³⁰ Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. ³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

Has it ever happened to you that you’ve met someone in person, and you realize that they weren’t who you expected them to be? Maybe it was a famous athlete. On the big screen and on your baseball cards, they look larger than life. But then you meet that person...and you realize they’re not so big after all. Not much taller than you. Without the uniform and camera lights, look kind of normal.

Or maybe a Hollywood celebrity. You see them in real life, and they’re so different than they are on TV. Wearing normal clothes. And you can see some of the wrinkles and imperfections that make-up artists and special effects crews are so good at covering up.

I wonder if it was similar for the Greeks we just heard about in the gospel. It was Passover time – celebrating God delivering Israel from slavery in Egypt - and they were among the thousands who made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate. If they hadn’t heard of Jesus before, they certainly did when they arrived. Jesus had reached celebrity status. Everyone was talking about him. How not long before, he had raised a man named Lazarus from the dead. How two days earlier, he had joined the throngs of pilgrims entering the city – but he entered riding on a donkey. Just like God promised in the Old Testament the Messiah would do.

And so these Greeks approach Jesus’ entourage in the temple courts with a request for Philip: “We want to see Jesus.” But when they did, would he be the Jesus they expected him to be? The Jesus they wanted to see?

I suppose that’s a good question for us to ask, too. After all, that’s what got you out of bed this morning: You want to see Jesus. You didn’t come here just for the beautiful music. For

the coffee and few minutes of fellowship. You came here to see Jesus. Especially as we near Holy Week, our worship will be all about seeing Jesus. But will he be the Jesus we *want* to see?

Philip and Andrew relay the request to Jesus. And Jesus replies, **The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.** And I wonder what went through the curious crowd's mind. Raising the dead was glorious. His triumphal entry into the city was glorious. But Jesus says, "You ain't seen nothing yet. Now the time has come for glory." What would that look like? Would he take David's throne? Conquer his foes? Deliver Israel from Rome, just like God did from Egypt so many Passovers ago?

But then Jesus goes on to tell them what it would look like: **"I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."** He speaks of glory, but not in earthly success or more miracles or political power. Jesus speaks of his greatest glory, and he speaks of dying. A death lifted up on a cross, a death so painful it already brings agony to his heart. If you've ever done gardening, there's nothing glorious about putting a seed into the cold, damp ground. Much less does there seem to be glory in Jesus' lifeless body being buried in it. They wanted to see Jesus...but I wonder, is this the glory they were expecting? Is this the Jesus they wanted to see?

Of course, for you and for me, it doesn't come as much of a surprise. We know Jesus didn't come into this world to perform miracles or change Palestinian politics. We know he came to save us from our sins. And we know that, in order to do that, he had to die. So this is what we expect to see in Jesus. It's what we *want* to see in him – him dying for me and saving me. Loving me more than he loves his own life!

But let me ask you this: Is *this* the Jesus you want to see? ²⁵ **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.** We get how it's true of Jesus – if he loved his life too much to give it up for us, we'd all die eternally. But now he says something similar is true of his followers: If we love our lives in this world more than our life with him, we lose both.

Is this the Jesus you want to see? The one who says that your comfort, your success, your wealth, everything and everyone you hold near and dear, cannot come before him. That if they do, you must be willing to sacrifice it all for his sake. Is this the Jesus you want to see? The one who says you can't go on living for what you want, what's best for you, but by what he wants – denying yourself for his sake and the sake of others. That you can't hold on to him and go on dabbling in the sinful pleasures of the world – that you must hate that part of you that loves them, and it has to die daily.

Is this the Jesus you want to see? Let's be honest: A part of us doesn't. The Greeks and the crowds wanted to see a Jesus who matched their definition of glory – and we want to see one who lets our lives match our own. And a life of sacrifice, self-denial, dying to yourself daily...well, it seems like the least glorious life there is. A part of us loves life in this world and hates to see it go. We'd rather have a Savior who's content to take the back seat while we focus on the glory of the here and now. Who's content letting our relationship with him be a part of our lives, but not life itself. And so often, isn't that how we've lived? Loving life here more than him?

But the Jesus we want to see isn't the Jesus we get. Thank God it's not. If it were, we'd live for the glories of this world, even as they slipped through our fingers along with our eternal life in him. If it were, the crowds that day would have gotten a miracle worker and a political Savior, but not the Savior they needed.

We want to see Jesus...but let's let him show us who he really is. When he does, it's truly amazing. **"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. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!"** His death is three days away. Yet he's already troubled as he looks ahead to the agony he'll endure. Not just the nails and the cross – the punishment for every sin of every sinner of every age. Every blow of God's wrath, every flame of hell earned. But Jesus doesn't ask his Father to keep him from it. In fact, he's looking forward to it! "Father, let's do this. Glorify your name." And the Father responds, "I have, and I will."

Why would Jesus be looking forward to this? When you think of how little we've loved Jesus, you'd understand if it were to get it over with so he could leave this world and be rid of us. But that's not why he was looking forward to it. Quite the opposite! **And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.** He was looking forward to it not to be rid of us, but to draw us to him. Looking forward to it because he loved us and wanted to be with us. And only by dying could he make that happen. Only by suffering all you deserved for your sins could he assure you wouldn't suffer any of it. Only by taking away the sins that separated you from him could he make you one with him and the Father. Only by dying the death you deserved could he win you life with him, now and forever.

Do you see the glory in it now? **"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."** I grew up in farm country. And this time of year, the farmers were getting the itch – it was almost planting time. It wasn't the most enjoyable work in Minnesota – the fields in spring there are cold and damp. But if you'd ask a farmer why he looked forward to it, he'd say: Just wait a few months. Wait until the harvest is coming in.

There seemed nothing glorious about it. A death lifted up on a cross, a death so painful it already brings agony to his heart. Much less does there seem to be glory in Jesus' lifeless body being buried in it. But it was the planting. And if you don't see the glory in it, and why Jesus was looking forward to it, just look at the harvest. It was all about the many seeds that his death would give life to. Do you know who those seeds are? You. Me. It was Jesus' most glorious moment, and it brought the Father glory, too, because it got them both what they most longed for and had planned from eternity to get: You. It made you theirs, now and forever.

But, did you notice? Jesus describes life with Jesus as being seeds. Not plants, not fruit - seeds. And there's a reason he does: Like it was in Jesus' death, the glory that's ours in our life with him is hidden. It seems anything but glorious: Self-denial and service. Letting go of all this world holds near and dear. It doesn't even seem much like life: It's a struggle against sin, really dying to yourself daily.

But it's the most glorious life there is. Why? Jesus says, **Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.** Jesus death was glorious because it brought us life, and because it glorified the Father. This life is the most glorious because it's the only life lived with Jesus. It's the only life that brings the Father glory – that he places his stamp of approval on.

We may not see the glory in it with our eyes just yet. But just wait. Wait until these seeds fall to the ground. Wait until the harvest, when Jesus raises you and me from death and gives us the eternal life he won for us. Wait until you stand in glory and see Jesus in all his glory.

Until then, could there be any better motto for our lives? "We want to see Jesus. We just want to see Jesus." Not as we want him to be, but as he truly is. Is there any more beautiful sight than that? God grant it to each of us. Amen.