
Day 1

Learn: Prayerfully read John 12.20-24. Some “Greeks,” Gentiles [non-Jews] from the Greco-Roman culture, were going to worship God. Gentile believers were welcome in the outer court of the Temple [the Court of Gentiles]. The Pharisees had lamented that “everyone” in Jerusalem was going after Jesus [12.19], now even Gentiles were coming to see him. Why did they want to see Jesus? Perhaps because of his fame as a miracle worker. If a couple of days had passed since 12.19, then Jesus had just cleared the Court of Gentiles for the second time, and stressed that God wanted the Temple to be a house of prayer for *all* nations [Mark 11.15-17]. Why did they approach Phillip? Maybe he was the first disciple they saw; maybe they knew he had a Greek name and thought he would be friendly.

In 12.22, John used present tense verbs, one way in Greek to convey excitement and draw the reader into what is happening. Jesus never responded to the request directly, but he spoke to what it represented. Just when Israel was about to reject their Messiah, Gentiles sought him out, reflecting that with his death and resurrection Jesus would usher in a New Covenant between mankind and God, which would include *all* people groups. Their approach signaled to Jesus that the climactic “hour” had dawned. It is significant that Jesus said “The hour *has come*,” because until now he always had said the hour *was coming*. Now, Jesus said, it was time for his sacrificial death. “Son of Man” was a title Jesus used for himself, which we explained previously.

Reflect: Jesus said it was time for him to be glorified, but he meant his death! His death was the path he must take to victory over sin and evil and to return to full glory as the Son of God at the Father’s right hand in Heaven; and his death was the supreme act of obedience to the will of God the Father. Only if the seed of wheat dies will there be germination for a great crop; only if Jesus dies will there be a great harvest of saved and righteous people. Do you understand how Jesus’ death brings about the harvest, and why the harvest would not occur without this death? Could you explain it to someone else? If not, it is time to review or to talk with a spiritual leader in the church!

Day 2

Learn: Prayerfully read John 12.23-26. Jews used the terms “love” and “hate” in this sense to show preference between options. So the one “hating” his life is not miserable at being alive; rather s/he is willing to die to self and to selfishness and learn to live for Christ and his gospel mission. The one “loving” life lives for now instead of for eternity; lives for worldly ambitions instead of for godly/biblical ones; maintains possessive control over his/her life, rather than yielding to God’s sovereignty over life; and thus elevates the self to a level of idolatry, because his/her focus is on the self and its desires instead of on God and his ways and desires.

There are multiple layers of meaning here. First, the person who absolutely “loves” life in this way has no interest in God or his Christ, and so lives by what is worldly and for what is worldly, and thus “loses” or “destroys” any chance at true, spiritual, eternal life; whereas the one who “hates” this life and thus comes to faith in Christ and follows him, protects the true spiritual life given to him/her and keeps it eternally. Second, a person who truly comes to faith in Christ will start to follow him, and as that person follows more closely, s/he will come to live for Christ and eternity, and thus move from “loving” this life for self to “hating” it for Christ. Third, if you really believe in Jesus and are born again to true spiritual life, but still are living like a pagan – caught up in materialism, excessive entertainment at the expense of ministry work, ego and pride, your “rights” in life, etc. – then you are destroying and thus losing the true life of walking with God; whereas if you learned to hate all that and live for Christ instead, you would protect and thus keep your spirituality, that true spiritual life, right now and carried into eternity.

Reflect: Prayerfully read Mark 8.34-36. In John 12.26, Jesus says where he is, his followers will be. We think, “Yea, that means I will go to glory in Heaven!” But Jesus more immediately was headed for the cross, his greatest sacrifice. As his crucifixion was the path to glorification, so our death to self [sacrificial willingness to live and die for Christ and his gospel mission] is our path to honor from God. Seriously, how well does your lifestyle indicate you “hate” this life? What steps should you take to improve? If you did improve, what would happen for you, in you?

Day 3

Learn: Prayerfully read John 12.23-33. We could translate the end of 12.27, “Rather, on account of this I came, *for* this hour” [compare NLT]. Jesus did not find his path easy; he was deeply troubled in his soul. But he did not beg

out of what he had to do, because he came *for* this sacrifice, *for* this “hour.” He told God the Father to glorify the Father’s name, to go ahead and take Jesus’ life. This was not just death, not even just a representative death in our place [Jesus dying instead of us dying], but a sacrificial death during which Jesus took on all the penalty God had saved up for our sin! all the condemnation God had reserved for us! We cannot imagine what it was like to be separated in a sense from the Father as Christ “became sin” for us [2 Corinthians 5.21; Galatians 3.13].

Since God said he would glorify his name again, it is tempting to look to verses like Ezekiel 36.22, which point to God glorifying his name in these “end times,” through New Covenant promises and the repentance of Israel; but probably God was referring to the subject at hand, the death and resurrection of Jesus, which Jesus explained in 12.31-32. Jesus explained because the crowd did not understand the voice of God, but God had spoken to bless them. The purpose of the Son of God coming was wrapped up in this pending sacrifice, and the purpose of the sacrifice was to glorify God through its effects. One of those effects was judgment of the world [12.31]. The world thought it was passing judgment on Jesus, but really God was judging our rebellion. The death signaled Israel’s rejection of the Son which was rejection of the Father. In murdering the Son, sin was in its most evil form. But the death of Jesus is the provision for God’s judgment of all the world: those who choose sin/evil and reject the Son will face eternal condemnation, while those who choose the light, the Son, in faith will receive a judgment of eternal life.

Reflect: Jesus brought glory to God the Father by submitting to his will, obeying his command, willingly suffering and dying to fulfill his mission, and thereby being victorious over sin and evil, both by living righteously and by dealing a blow to the reign of sin and evil on Earth. As followers of Jesus, we need to submit to God the Father like Christ did; in fact, we need to submit to Christ himself, as our anointed king, head of the church, and God’s ultimate representative on Earth. This means more than going to church, right? it means more than prayer and Bible study; it means more even than serving on a ministry team and sharing the gospel with non-believers. It means being willing to sacrifice, even suffer for God; it means dying to self and living for Christ. With regard to your money, time, effort, what more could you be doing for Christ? What are you willing to do to further the victory of Jesus?

Day 4

Learn: Prayerfully read John 12.23-33. One effect of Jesus’ sacrifice was judgment on the world. Another was victory over Satan, the “ruler” of this world. The cross seemed like evil’s triumph, but actually it was evil’s defeat. Satan remains a powerful foe to the righteous, but Jesus made it possible for people’s eyes to be opened to see clearly instead of being deceived, and he freed people from the power of sin; and the result is many are saved in faith and learning to live righteously. Satan’s power is broken and his fate is sealed. A third effect was Jesus being lifted up on the cross, and thereby lifted up in exaltation [Isaiah 52.13]. A fourth effect was that Jesus would draw people to himself. Remember the Greeks approaching Jesus [12.20-21]? Jesus’ death would usher in the New Covenant between God and mankind, which would include every people group, so all could approach God freely.

Reflect: In what ways, if any, are you not living in victory over sin? Talk with a spiritual leader if you struggle, because Christ won this freedom for you! How could you take an interest in every people group hearing the gospel?

Day 5

Learn: Prayerfully read John 12.34-36. Jesus used the “Son of Man” title when he said now was time for him to be glorified [12.23], and here he said this glorification would come through his death on the cross. This is just days after the crowd proclaimed him the Christ and Ultimate Davidic King as he entered Jerusalem, and the king title also referred to the Son of Man in prophecy, who would rule in God’s name. Old Testament passages suggest God’s never ending kingdom [e.g. Isaiah 9.7; Ezekiel 37.25]. The people expected Jesus to triumph and lead them, not die. They wanted to know what kind of Messiah/Son of Man Jesus had in mind that he would have to die! There was a finite amount of time to accept Jesus while he was there. He told them, if they would walk in the light while they had the light of the world, then darkness would not catch them when it descended. If they would believe in him, they would become “sons of light,” people of Christ who live by God’s revelation and reflect his ethical qualities.

Reflect: It is the same for us. If we want to be “sons of light,” people of God, then we need to respond in faith to Jesus, believing in his provision of grace and thus obtaining salvation, and then letting grace transform us to reflect Christ’s nature as we live our lives. What do you want for yourself spiritually? in your relationship with God? in your ethics, personality, and lifestyle? Pray for these changes...