

John 12:20-29

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[0:00] Well, amen and good morning. Please join me in John's Gospel, chapter 12. Thank you. Very good to be back with you this morning.

Thank you for all of the kind words and well wishes. I'm glad to be here because it means I'm not laying in bed, not feeling well, but also because I just genuinely miss you when I can't be with you on the Lord's day.

I'm so happy to be back. Our text for today is John, chapter 12, verses 20 through 29. As we've been working our way through John's Gospel, particularly over these last several weeks, we've been observing something that I think is essential to a proper understanding of Jesus Christ and the nature of the salvation he came to accomplish.

It is possible to recognize certain truths about Jesus while fundamentally misunderstanding the significance of those truths. Indeed, it is possible to possess a reasonably accurate understanding of his identity, acknowledge his miraculous power, and even celebrate his arrival as the promised Messiah while remaining deeply confused about the purpose for which he came.

And this is precisely the situation that confronted us in our previous passage two weeks ago. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the crowds welcomed him with palm branches and cries of praise.

[1:39] They identified him as the king of Israel, the one who came in the name of the Lord, and in doing so, they employed language drawn directly from the scripture.

Their identification of Jesus as king was correct. Their expectation that God would fulfill his covenant promises through this king was also correct.

But as we observe, their understanding of the manner in which Jesus would establish his kingdom was deeply deficient. They anticipated a Messiah whose triumph would be manifested through the defeat of their political enemies and the restoration of Israel's national prominence.

They were looking for the kind of victory that would be immediately recognizable according to the ordinary expectations of human power. And yet, Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey.

In fulfillment of Zacharias' prophecy concerning the humble king who would bring salvation and peace. But the crowds did not understand, and what even the disciples would not fully comprehend until after Jesus had been glorified, was that the promised king would secure his victory by suffering and dying.

[3:02] The king would conquer through apparent defeat. The one who possesses authority over death would voluntarily submit himself to death.

And the glory of the Son of God would be revealed, not merely in his miraculous works, or in the public enthusiasm surrounding his arrival, but supremely in the humiliation and suffering of the cross.

So, that brings us to our passage this morning, where John records a remarkable development in the events surrounding Jesus' final Passover.

Some Gentiles, the text specifically calls them Greeks, arrive in Jerusalem and express a desire to see Jesus.

That might initially strike us as a rather insignificant detail. Perhaps you've read right past this before, especially when compared with the extraordinary events that have already taken place.

[4:06] After all, Jesus has attracted considerable attention throughout his ministry, and the presence of a few more interested individuals might seem hardly worthy of mention.

But John's gospel is not simply a chronological account of everything that happened during the earthly ministry of Christ. John is carefully selecting and arranging historical events to communicate particular theological truths about the person and work of Jesus.

And the arrival of these Gentiles becomes the occasion for one of the most significant declarations Jesus makes concerning his approaching death. Throughout John's gospel, Jesus has repeatedly explained that his hour had not yet come.

We'll look at that more in a bit. But here, in verse 23, Jesus announces that the hour has finally arrived.

And what follows is an explanation of the astonishing relationship between his death, his glory, the salvation of the nations, and the lives of those who would follow him.

[5 : 25] So without further ado, let's pray and then we'll begin reading in verse 20. Father God, we ask that you would help us today as we take up your word together.

We want to rightly understand it and apply it in our lives, and we humbly recognize that it's impossible to do this without your help. We know that this text was written for your glory and for our good, and so we ask that you would help us believe its promises, obey its commands, and have affection for you, its author.

And we pray all of this in the name of Christ. Amen. John chapter 12, beginning in verse 20. Now, among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks.

So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, Sir, we wish to see Jesus. Philip went and told Andrew.

Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

[6 : 44] But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

If anyone serves me, he must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this purpose, I have come to this hour.

Father, glorify your name. Then a voice came from heaven, I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.

The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, An angel has spoken to him. Now I will enumerate them for you now, but we'll look at this text in five points.

[7 : 46] You can be listening out for them. Point number one, the arrival of the hour, which we'll see in those first four verses, 20 through 23.

Notice how John begins. He tells us that among those who had traveled to Jerusalem to worship at the feast were some Greeks. Now, before we consider the significance of their presence, we need to remember what has just happened.

At the conclusion of our previous passage, in verse 19, the Pharisees expressed their frustration over the apparent inability of the religious establishment to contain Jesus' growing influence.

They complained that their efforts were accomplishing nothing, and then they made a statement that was intended as an expression of exasperation, but proved to be remarkably significant in light of what John records next.

They declared that the whole world was going after Jesus. Of course, the Pharisees were speaking with a certain degree of exaggeration.

[8 : 57] They were frustrated by the crowds who had gathered around Jesus, and they were alarmed by the possibility that his popularity would undermine their position among the people.

But John immediately follows their complaint by introducing a group of Gentiles who have come looking for Jesus. That sequence is not accidental.

Now, John identifies these individuals as Greeks. And in the first century, the term was frequently used to identify Greek-speaking Gentiles from various parts of the Roman world.

And the point is this, and you'll see this repeatedly throughout Scripture, that these are not Jewish people seeking Jesus. The fact that they had come to Jerusalem to worship during Passover suggests that they possessed some meaningful interest in the God of Israel, which I assume fuels their interest in Jesus and what he has to say.

Look at verse 21. They approach Philip, who John identifies as being from Bethsaida in Galilee, and they express their desire to him to see Jesus.

[10:18] They likely approach Philip because his Greek name, his name is Greek, or his association with a region containing substantial Gentile influence made him seem accessible, perhaps, right?

A bridge to being able to speak to Jesus. And this is their request. They want to see Jesus, but they're not merely asking Philip to point Jesus out in the crowd, like, let us have a look at him. They're seeking an opportunity to meet him, speak with him, or at least to gain some personal access to the one whose ministry had attracted such extraordinary attention.

Philip, evidently, doesn't know exactly how to respond because verse 22 tells us that he goes to Andrew, and then the two of them bring the request to Jesus.

The assumption here is that he goes to Andrew. Can we do this? Is this the thing that would be appropriate to do? And then they go together to Jesus. Why does John record this request?

[11:29] And why does Jesus respond to it in the way that he does? Because if you look carefully at verse 23, Jesus seems to provide an answer that has very little to do with what Philip and Andrew have just told him.

They report that some Greeks wish to see him, and Jesus responds by announcing that his hour has come. He launches into something that seems unrelated at first.

John never explicitly tells us whether these Greeks received the personal audience that they requested. I like to assume that they're still standing around as Jesus speaks, but we don't know for sure, and I think that that omission is significant.

Because John wants us to look beyond the question of whether these particular individuals were able to meet Jesus, and recognize what their arrival represents in the unfolding purpose of God. Remember what John told us in chapter 11. Following the resurrection of Lazarus, the Jewish council gathered to consider what should be done about Jesus, and Caiaphas, the high priest, argued that it would be better for one man to die than for the entire nation to perish.

[12:56] But John explained that Caiaphas, without understanding the full significance of his own words, had prophesied concerning the death of Christ. Jesus would die for the nation, but not for the nation only.

His death would also result in the gathering together of God's scattered children. That statement in John 11, verse 51 and 52, anticipates the reality we begin to see represented in this passage.

Jesus has not merely come to secure the salvation of ethnic Israel. He has come as the promised offspring of Abraham, through whom the nations of the earth will be blessed.

He is the servant anticipated by Isaiah, whose mission would extend beyond the restoration of Israel to the bringing of God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

He is the king of Zechariah, chapter 9. You may remember we read some of that two weeks ago in case you don't. Verses 9 and 10.

[14:07] Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, your king is coming to you. Righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt the foal of a donkey.

I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem and the battle bow shall be cut off and he shall speak peace to the nations. His rule shall be from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth.

The arrival of these Greeks demonstrates that the significance of Jesus' mission cannot be confined to the expectations of the Jewish crowds who welcomed him into Jerusalem.

But notice something else. Jesus does not respond to the interest of the Gentiles by announcing the immediate commencement of a worldwide ministry of public teaching.

Instead, he announces his approaching death. And that is because the salvation of the nations will not be accomplished simply by extending the geographical reach of Jesus' teaching.

[15:25] It will be accomplished through his sacrificial death. The nations do not merely need an opportunity to hear the wisdom of a remarkable Jewish teacher.

They need reconciliation with God. They need forgiveness of sins. They need deliverance from divine judgment. They need a Savior.

And the blessings promised to Abraham cannot reach the nations apart from the redemptive work of the one in whom those promises find their fulfillment.

Which brings us to Jesus' remarkable declaration in verse 23. The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

Now if you've been paying attention as we've studied John's gospel you should recognize immediately that something momentous has changed previously mentioned.

[16:26] Throughout his ministry Jesus has repeatedly referred to an appointed hour that had not yet arrived. In John 2 for example at the wedding in Cana Jesus explained that his hour had not yet come.

In John 7 when the authorities wanted to arrest him John tells us that they were unable to do so because his hour had not yet come. And again in John 8 the same explanation is provided.

We've talked about this divine timeline that Jesus is following again and again. We should understand these statements as evidence that the earthly ministry of Jesus unfolded according to the sovereign purpose and timing of his father.

His life was not ultimately governed by the hostility of his enemies the enthusiasm of the crowds or the unpredictable circumstances of first century Judea.

But now the hour that had repeatedly been described as future has finally arrived. And Jesus identifies that hour as the hour of his glorification.

[17:38] salvation. Now that ought to make us think carefully about the nature of his glory.

Because when we hear that the son of man is about to be glorified we might naturally anticipate some extraordinary public demonstration of divine majesty.

Perhaps we would expect a manifestation of heavenly power the visible defeat of his opponents or the immediate establishment of his kingdom in a manner that no one could deny.

And certainly the glorification of Jesus includes his resurrection his exaltation to the father's right hand that's where my mind rushes off to and his return to the glory that he possessed with the father before the world existed.

But in John's gospel we should get this clear in our minds that glorification cannot be separated from the cross. Indeed the cross is the decisive means by which the son accomplishes the father's redemptive purpose and reveals his glory.

And that is precisely what Jesus explains in the next verse. So point number two notice the necessity of the cross.

[19:03] Just look at verse 24 for this point. he tells his listeners that unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains alone.

But through its death it produces a harvest. Now Jesus is using a familiar agricultural illustration to communicate a profound theological truth.

An ordinary grain of wheat. I think we all understand this concept. As long as that grain remains isolated unplanted it remains a single grain.

It may be preserved examined stored perhaps could admire the grain but it will not produce a harvest of wheat while it remains in that condition.

If there is to be multiplication the grain must be placed into the ground and in that process of germination the seed as it previously existed gives way to the development of new life.

[20:19] So it must die it must be buried is what he is saying. Now Jesus is not trying to provide a technical lesson in botany from all what he's doing here. He's using an illustration drawn from ordinary experience of agriculture to explain the necessity of his approaching death.

It's a metaphor for what's about to happen and the central point is unmistakable. The fruitfulness of his mission depends on his death.

Without his death there will be no saving harvest. We need both Jesus' active obedience his perfect keeping of the law that's what we've been witnessing up to this point and will in the coming chapters and we also need what is called his passive obedience namely his sacrificial death to pay the penalty for our sin.

Jesus did not become incarnate simply to demonstrate what a righteous human life should look like. He did not enter the world merely to provide a more complete understanding of religious truth and he did not come simply to inspire people to become more loving or sacrificial or more devoted to God.

He came to save sinners and sinners cannot be saved by admiring the righteousness of Jesus. We must be reconciled to God through his sacrificial death.

[22:00] Why? Because our fundamental problem is not simply that we lack sufficient moral instruction. Our fundamental problem at the base is that we are guilty before a holy God.

We have violated his good law. We have rejected his loving authority and we have fallen short of the glory for which we were created. And because God is righteous he cannot treat our rebellion as though it were insignificant his justice must be satisfied.

His holiness cannot be compromised. The penalty of sin cannot be simply ignored. And this is all good. We want a God who functions this way.

So if sinners are to receive forgiveness and eternal life there must be an atonement that actually addresses our guilt. And this is why the death of Christ was necessary.

Remember what John the Baptist declares near the beginning of this gospel account. When he saw Jesus approaching he identified him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[23:18] So fitting here at this Passover feast. This statement connects Jesus to the sacrificial system of the Old Testament and to the promises of a coming Redeemer who would bear the sins of his people.

And throughout John's gospel we have been watching those expectations move toward their fulfillment. Jesus is the true bread from heaven.

Jesus is the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. He is the one who possesses authority to give eternal life. And now he explains that the accomplishment of a saving purpose requires his death.

Jesus is not suggesting that he must die because his enemies are too powerful for him to overcome. Nor is he suggesting that his mission has encountered a difficulty for which death has become the only remaining possibility.

the necessity of his death is not the necessity of his helplessness but of ours. Why does Jesus speak about his death when the Gentiles express a desire to see him?

[24:33] Because it is through his death and resurrection that God creates one redeemed people from every tribe and language and people and nation.

You see what he's doing here. Point number three. We can note the cost of discipleship verses 25 and 26.

Now in these verses Jesus makes a transition that might initially seem a bit abrupt. He has just explained the necessity of his own death by comparing himself to a grain of wheat that must die in order to produce a harvest.

But then he begins speaking about the lives of those who would follow him. He's not changing the subject. Rather he is explaining that the nature of his saving work has profound implications for the lives of those who receive the salvation he has come to accomplish.

Notice verse 25. Jesus teaches that the person who loves his life will lose it. While the person who hates his life in this world will preserve!

[25:47] He's going to for eternal life. That's a remarkable statement. And if we're going to understand it correctly, we need to consider what Jesus means by these contrasting expressions of love and hatred.

God because Jesus is obviously not commanding us to cultivate a psychological contempt for ourselves. Nor is he suggesting that the Christian life requires us to despise the physical existence God has given us.

Throughout the scriptures, human life is consistently presented as a good gift from God. We are created in his image. We are called to exercise responsible stewardship over our bodies.

And we are commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves, which assumes that ordinary concern for our own well-being is neither inherently sinful or inappropriate.

So what does Jesus mean when he speaks about loving or hating one's life? He's contrasting two fundamentally different orientations toward life.

[27:00] The person who loves his life in the manner Jesus condemns is the person who regards his present existence, his personal ambitions, his earthly comforts, and his immediate desires as the highest priorities governing his decisions.

This kind of person is determined to preserve his life on his own terms. He wants the benefits of God's creation without surrendering himself to the authority of the Creator.

He wants fulfillment without obedience, security without sacrifice, and ultimately life without the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some years ago we had a young man who was a member of our church who was kind of on this trajectory and was beginning to read and listen to various sources that wanted to undermine the

inerrancy and the authority of the Bible.

And in response to that I wrote a little opening phrase at the beginning of all of my sermons just before we read the text. And I don't say it anymore, most of you will be familiar with this, but in some sense I typically pray this.

[28 : 19] And I would just say this, and this was in response to him and the way he was thinking. I would just say this, beloved, this is God's word to us, written for his glory and our good.

We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises, yes, right, we want to believe its promises and obey its commands.

You must have God on his terms. God now as a very small aside, as we're thinking about these Gentiles coming and seeking Jesus and that particular phrase in the middle of this text, I want to play something for you.

I've heard that trying technological things when you haven't tested them is a great idea when everybody is looking at you. But this was sent to me from a ministry partner, Caleb, they were serving in Southeast Asia, and he had preach in the native language the other day and sent me this recording.

He uses that phrase. He said to me, I've been plagiarizing that phrase for quite some time. But he did it in the native language. I just wanted you to hear it.

[29 : 35] I've played this over and over again this past week and I've been so very encouraged. Isn't that cool?

Not the whole thing, that's about a third of it. The closed captioning goes on, it's quite long for him to say all of that. This is what Jesus is talking about, right?

He is warning that the person who insists upon possessing life in that manner will ultimately lose it. Now the irony of that statement is just extraordinary.

The person who organizes his entire existence around preserving and enjoying his present life will eventually discover that everything he sought to preserve was temporary. His possessions cannot protect him from death.

Reputation cannot secure his standing before God. His accomplishments cannot provide forgiveness of sin. And his efforts to maintain personal autonomy cannot deliver him from divine judgment.

[30 : 55] As powerful as you may think you are to make your own choices now, you will one day stand before God. This person may gain everything this world can offer, but if he remains alienated from God, he has lost the only life that ultimately matters.

And Jesus is not speaking merely about the inevitable experience of physical death. We all know this. He's speaking about the loss of eternal life.

Remember the question Jesus raises elsewhere in the Gospels concerning the value of gaining the whole world while forfeiting one's soul. That's the issue presented here.

Conversely, it is possible to surrender everything this world considers valuable while receiving the greatest possible treasure.

Which is why Jesus describes the second person as one who hates his life in this world. Now, the language of hatred is a familiar biblical way of communicating a radical distinction in allegiance.

[32 : 11] We encounter similar language in Luke chapter 14 verse 26 where Jesus teaches that discipleship requires a willingness to support even our closest earthly relationships to our allegiance to him.

The point is not that genuine discipleship requires a violation of the commandments to honor our parents or love our families. rather, our love for Christ must be so supreme that every competing loyalty is subject to him.

And that's the point Jesus is making in John 12. The person who hates his life in this world is the person who refuses to regard his present life as more valuable than obedience to Jesus Christ. He recognizes that his life belongs to God. His time belongs to God. His possessions belong to God. His abilities, opportunities, relationships, ambitions, future, all belong to the Lord who created him and redeemed him.

And consequently, he is willing to surrender anything that would require disobedience to Christ. Christ. Now, I think we should be very careful about the way we apply this passage because there is a tendency within certain expressions of Christianity to reduce self-denial to a collection of external religious practices.

[33:44] We may begin imagining that the seriousness of our discipleship can be measured by the degree to which we voluntarily deprive ourselves of ordinary earthly comforts.

Self-denial is not at its core a question of how much discomfort we can impose upon ourselves. It's a question of who possesses ultimate authority over our lives.

The call to deny ourselves is not the call to engage in suffering for its own sake. It is the call to surrender our supposed right to determine the course of our lives independently of Christ.

Christian discipleship begins with the recognition that we belong to Jesus. We've been purchased by our personal preferences.

The concern here is less about what we do or don't do and more about the orientation of our hearts, which will have expression I recognize.

[34:50] Notice how Jesus develops this idea in verse 26. He declares that anyone who serves him must follow him. Jesus does not identify his servants merely by the activities they perform.

He identifies them by their willingness to follow him. And where is Jesus going? Within the immediate context, he's going to cross.

We need to make a really important distinction at this point. When Jesus calls us to follow him, he is not suggesting that our suffering accomplishes the same redemptive purpose as his suffering.

His death is unique. He's qualified to offer himself as the substitutionary sacrifice for sinners. Others. He alone bears the judgment of God in the place of those who he came to redeem.

Our suffering does not supplement his atoning work. And our obedience does not earn the salvation that his death has accomplished.

[36:04] The Christian does not contribute to his justification through self denial. We are justified by grace alone through faith alone in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone.

Amen. But the salvation that unites us to Jesus Christ also produces a transformation in our relationship to the world.

We are called to follow our crucified and risen Lord. salvation. And I think that distinction is especially important in a culture that frequently presents Christianity as a means of securing personal fulfillment.

So on the one hand we suffer that we might earn righteousness. On the other we may think that Christianity is a way that we just fill up. We are sometimes encouraged to think that following Jesus will enable us to accomplish our ambitions, achieve our goals, overcome our difficulties, and obtain the kind of earthly life we have always wanted.

The gospel brings extraordinary blessings. Forgiveness, reconciliation, adoption, peace with God, and the promise of eternal life and obedience to God's word frequently produces very real benefits within our earthly circumstances.

[37:28] promises. But Jesus never promises that discipleship will preserve all our ambitions or protect us from suffering. In fact, he tells us that genuine discipleship will necessarily require the surrender of our lives to his authority.

And at times, that surrender is costly. But notice that Jesus does not conclude verse 26 with a warning about cost.

He concludes with a promise. He tells his disciples that those who serve him will be with him. And that the Father will honor those who serve the Son.

That's extraordinary. What promise. Jesus moving towards humiliation, suffering, and death. And he tells those who follow him that their ultimate destination is not defeat, but fellowship with him.

The servant will be where the Master is. And in the context of John's gospel, that promise anticipates what Jesus will explain more fully in chapter 14 when he speaks about preparing a place for his disciples and receiving them to himself.

[38:52] Christian discipleship may require the loss of things we presently treasure, but it leads to the possession of something incomparably greater. We will be with Christ.

And not only will we be with Christ, but Jesus says that the Father will honor those who serve him. The eternal God whose glory surpasses anything we can comprehend promises to honor those who belong to his Son.

Fourthly, you're tracking time, I'm going to speed up. The resolve of the Savior. Look at verse 27 in the first part of 28.

Jesus has just explained his death is necessary for the salvation of his people and he has called his disciples to follow him in self-denying obedience. But now he reveals something of the anguish he

is experiencing as he contemplates the suffering that awaits him.

He explains that his soul is troubled. We should see the significance of that statement because throughout John's gospel, the authority of Jesus has been presented with extraordinary clarity.

[40:08] He speaks with divine authority. He possesses knowledge that no ordinary human could possess. He exercises sovereign power over disease and nature and demons and death itself. And in our study of chapter 11 we witness him standing before the tomb of Lazarus and commanding a dead man to come out.

His word was sufficient to reverse the physical reality of death and yet here as Jesus contemplates his own approaching death he expresses distress.

Now we should not interpret the distress as though Jesus were experiencing some kind of crisis of faith nor should we imagine that he has become uncertain about the father's purposes.

He's repeatedly explained the necessity of his death and he has deliberately moved toward Jerusalem with full knowledge of what awaits him. But the certainty of his mission does not eliminate the reality of his human suffering.

We understand this to maintain a biblical doctrine of the incarnation. Jesus Christ is not merely God appearing to possess a human body.

[41:18] He's not a divine person who has temporarily adopted the outward characteristics of humanity or remaining unaffected by genuinely human experiences.

Truly God and truly man. The hypostatic union. He is the eternal son of God who has assumed a true human nature.

He possesses a human body, a human mind, a human will. He experiences genuine human affections and emotions. His humanity is not diminished by his deity.

So when Jesus tells us that his soul is troubled, we should understand that he is describing genuine anguish. The approaching cross is not something he regards with emotional indifference.

He knows the coming pain of physical suffering. He knows the coming horror of death. More importantly, he knows that his death will involve bearing the judgment of God against the sins of his people, a thing we could not quite comprehend.

[42:34] Now we need to recognize that the distress of Jesus that he's experiencing is not evidence of some kind of weakness. There's nothing sinful about the natural human aversion to suffering and death.

Death is not part of the goodness of creation as God established it. Death entered the world through sin. And although Christ is completely without sin, he has entered a world corrupted by sin and voluntarily assumed the responsibility of bearing sin's penalty on behalf of his people.

sin. It should not surprise us therefore that he experiences anguish as he anticipates the cross. In fact, his distress ought to deepen our understanding of the significance of what he's about to accomplish.

Now, there is an interesting connection between this passage and what we read in other gospels concerning Jesus' experience in the Garden of Gethsemane. John does not provide the same extended account of Jesus' agony in the Garden that we find in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Instead, John records this earlier expression of distress as Jesus contemplates the approaching hour. And the theological relationship between the passage is unmistakable.

[43:53] In both settings, we encounter the genuine anguish of Jesus as he considers the suffering that awaits him. And in both settings, his response is characterized by perfect submission to the Father's will.

Look again at verse 27. Jesus raises the question of what he should say in light of his distress. Should he ask the Father to deliver him from this hour?

Now, there's a legitimate interpretive question concerning the punctuation of this verse because the earliest Greek manuscripts do not contain the same system that we use in our English translations. And commentators have differed over whether Jesus is describing a prayer he might offer or actually expressing a petition before immediately reaffirming his submission to the Father's purpose.

I appreciate the punctuation the ESV translators use, and I read it that way quite purposefully, which makes the question at this point rhetorical.

[45:02] He's asking it, should I ask this? No, I won't ask this. I'm going to submit myself to the Father. But yet later in the garden, he does.

And I think we see Jesus as humanity going through the exercise, taking up God's promise and purpose and speaking the truth to himself.

Either way, the essential point is not difficult. He chooses to abandon the purpose for which he has come. He declares that this hour is the very reason he has arrived at this point in his mission.

Now in Jesus' distress, notice the brief prayer in verse 28. So a lesson in prayer here, I think. He asks the Father to glorify his name.

That's his response to this anguish. Father, glorify your name. Does not make the preservation of his earthly life the ultimate objective of this prayer.

[46:06] He makes the glory of his Father the concern. And that is entirely consistent with everything we have seen throughout John's gospel.

I'll skip bringing up all of those points. the Father's glory is what he seeks here, which brings us to the remarkable response that followed Jesus' prayer.

So number five, we're going to land the plane here soon. Last part of verse 28 and verse 29. Look at the second half of verse 28. Jesus has just asked the Father to glorify his name and John tells us that a voice comes from heaven declaring that the Father has glorified his name and will glorify it again.

Now throughout the scriptures, occasions on which God speaks audibly from heaven are extraordinarily significant. We should remember the voice of the Father at the baptism of Jesus when he identified Jesus as his beloved son.

We should remember the transfiguration when the Father again testified concerning the identity of his son and commanded the disciples to listen to him. And now as Jesus approaches the cross, the Father once again provides an audible testimony.

[47:21] But note its content. The Father declares he has already glorified his name and that he will glorify it again. What does that mean?

Well, throughout the earthly ministry of Jesus, the Father's glory has been revealed through the person and work of his son. Remember what John told us in chapter one. The eternal word became flesh and dwelt among us and the disciples beheld his glory.

The glory of the Father was revealed through the incarnation. It was manifested through the signs Jesus performed. It was revealed through his authoritative teaching. It was demonstrated through his perfect obedience.

And it was displayed through the extraordinary revelation of divine grace and truth embodied in his very person. Consider the miracle we've recently studied in John chapter 11.

Before raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus explained that the sickness would ultimately result in the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified through it. And when Jesus stood before the tomb, he reminded Martha that belief would enable her to see the glory of God.

[48:31] Then he called Lazarus from the grave. And in that miraculous display of authority over death, the glory of God was revealed through the power of a Son. So when the Father declares that he has already glorified his name, we should understand that his glory has been, we will glorify his name again.

And in the immediate context, that declaration directs our attention toward the approaching death and exaltation of Jesus. The Father will be glorified through the obedient sacrifice of a Son.

And he will be glorified through the resurrection and the exaltation that follows. these events are so intimately connected with John's theology that the death, resurrection, exaltation of Jesus together constitute the climactic accomplishment of his appointed hour.

The cross reveals the Father's glory because it demonstrates the perfection of his redemptive purpose. Now, look at verse 29.

John records that the crowd standing nearby heard the voice from heaven, but they did not respond to it all in the same way. Some concluded that they had heard thunder.

[49:48] Others believed that an angel had spoken to Jesus. That's an interesting detail, right? What is happening here? We might imagine that an audible voice from heaven would immediately eliminate every possibility of misunderstanding.

Surely, if God himself speaks audibly in the presence of a crowd, everyone will recognize what has happened. That is not what John records.

The varied responses shows the same theme we've seen again and again in John's gospel.

Receipt, rejection. Now, there are some whom I respect and appreciate greatly that suggest that

some interpret the sound as a natural phenomenon.

They just hear thunder. They hear a noise, but not the father's voice. Others, then it is suggested, recognize that something supernatural may have occurred, but they do not identify the full significance of the father's testimony.

And maybe that's what's going on here. This is what D.A. Carson suggests, and I will tell you right now that if I'm going to disagree with D.A. Carson, I'm going to have a big slice of humble pie with me at the same time.

[51:07] That's what I'm about to do. I'm not sure that that, in this exact formulation, is what's happening here. Is there varied response?

Confusion? Yeah. Lack of clarified significance? Yeah. We can see that that's the case. But I argue that John has recorded these events in this way to make a really significant point.

I have yet to tell you why I chose to have a study verses 20 through 29. Your subtitling makes no sense of that, does it? If you've been with us in our study of John, you might have guessed.

Yes, this passage is chiasmic. Yep. It begins and ends with a crowd. Begins and it ends with a crowd.

What is John doing? A little while ago, TJ led us in a reading of Exodus chapter 19. We encourage you to look at that again.

[52:10] You can look at it in your bulletin or turn in your Bible. Start reading in verse 16. I want you to see the words in front of you, so get there as I read this. I'm going to read it relatively quickly and I'll point out the point I intend to make.

verse 16, Exodus 19. On the morning of the third day, there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast so that all the people in the camp trembled.

Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire. Smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln and the whole mountain trembled greatly.

And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him in thunder. The Lord came down on Mount Sinai to the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain.

And Moses went up. And the Lord said to Moses, Go down and warn the people lest they break through to the Lord to look and many of them perish.

[53:17] Also let the priests who come near to the Lord consecrate themselves lest the Lord break out against them. And Moses said to the Lord, the people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for you yourself warned us saying, set limits around the mountain and consecrate it.

And the Lord said to him, Go down and come up bringing Aaron with you, but do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the Lord, lest he break out against them.

So Moses went down to the people and told them. Right? So, God's people, a crowd of Israelites are led out of captivity to a mountain where a covenant is established.

Do you remember what happens just before they're led out? The Passover. The killing of that lamb and the spreading of the blood over the door and the angel of death passing over those homes of the Israelites.

And here we are at the Passover feast. It's about to be celebrated. this covenant established in Exodus is the covenant that we regularly call the Old Covenant.

[54:29] Did you note characteristic of the giving of this covenant from the text that we just read? Moses goes to meet God.

Takes Aaron with him. Moses goes up the mountain but the people do not. limits are set for them. They cannot go up. What will happen if they go up?

They will perish. Amen. In our text, as the new covenant dawns, a crowd gathers.

A crowd not just Israelites but also of Greeks. And what do they hear? They hear thunder. They hear thunder.

So go back to our text and note a characteristic found in it. Now I've said to you already as we talk about chiasms, there's some correspondence with the beginning, verses 20 and 21, and the end, verse 29, there's a crowd and a crowd.

[55:37] The central text, the chiasmic center is verse 25, whoever loses his life, hates his life, will keep for eternal life, right? This is the central piece of this.

And on either side of that, you have Jesus expressing in this metaphor his death and it being fruitful. And on the other side of that, the promise that the one who serves me will follow me and where I am, there will my servant be.

Presence of God, Christ with us and us with him. God, I think that's what John is doing here. This record, it's a historical account, it happened, John's recording it for us in this way, that we might see this dawning, this coming of the new covenant, the difference, presence with God, being restored to him, in relationship with him, not a distant thundering from a cloud, God, but being brought into his presence.

Do you believe that fellowship with Jesus Christ is more valuable than anything this world can offer? Jesus does not promise that following him will preserve everything we presently treasure.

He promises something infinitely greater himself. He promises that his servants will be with him and he promises that the Father will honor those who serve his Son.

[57 : 17] We do well to understand the glory of God as the ultimate purpose of our salvation. Jesus approached the hour of his great suffering with a supreme concern for the glory of his Father.

You exist for the glory of God. We, the church, exist for the glory of God among the peoples of the world. God is our God.

We know him. We're in relationship with him. And it's a task given to us to tell all peoples of his glory. Let's pray.