

The Hour Has Come

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[0 : 00] There are some moments of glory in sports history that are well known, I think, for basketball fans, of which we have a couple here, and so I've chosen it for you, Paul and Gil, wherever you are.

It's the next one from Michael Jordan called The Shot. That's what it's known as. The Bulls have three seconds to try a shot and try to win the game.

You'll see the drama unfold. Sellers will inbound. He's taken. Sellers has Jordan.

Jordan with two seconds to go. Puts him out and scores! That's a buzzer! Michael Jordan has one in all circles. Michael Jordan hit the basket at the buzzer.

And there goes the Bulls coach of the other thing. He will complete the floor. It's one of those great moments, and if you are a basketball fan, I'm sure you'd appreciate it than those who aren't.

[1 : 07] But for another one a bit closer to our time, do you remember Usain Bolt's 2016 100-metre sprint? And do you remember how he won the race? Smiling at the camera.

Can you believe that? The other guy's busting a gut, and he's got time to pose. Here's another moment of glory in history. Now, of course, these moments of glory often reveal the greatness of their character, but perhaps also the splendor or beauty of the shot, which in turn leads to them being honored or praised by the fans, or in Usain's case, a gold medal.

And those three ideas are really the three different ways in which the word glory is used in the Bible. I don't know if you've ever... I mean, we say the word glory quite a bit, but it seems to be used in different ways.

And so, firstly, it can mean to refer to someone's greatness of character. In fact, in the Old Testament, the word glory means their weight or heaviness, not physically, but in terms of character, their greatness.

This is what we'll see particularly with Jesus today. That's how glory will be used particularly in our passage today. Secondly, glory can refer to someone's splendor or radiance or beauty, like a glorious sunset or sunrise.

[2 : 29] This is the glory that Jesus left when he came from heaven to earth. He took off his radiance and splendor and took the form of a human as a servant.

And then, thirdly, there's the idea of glory, which has to do with honor. So, glorifying someone, honoring, praising, and so on. And these things often overlap.

So, to use Michael Jordan as an example, his shot was a glorious or beautiful shot, which revealed his glory or greatness, which then led to the fans glorifying or honoring.

So, that's how it kind of fits together. But so far, we've seen glory, Jesus' glory, in terms of his greatness. So, ever since the start of John's gospel, he's been revealing it.

So, when he was at the wedding in Cana, where he turned water to wine, John writes, What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the miracles, the signs through which he, notice, revealed his glory.

[3 : 35] That is, his greatness. But today, Jesus says that the moment, the hour of his greatest glory has now come.

Which brings us to point one in your outlines and verse 20 in your Bibles. Have a look there. Now, there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival, the Passover festival. We're still there. Here's a bit of a turning point in Jesus' ministry.

Up until now, we've been told a few times that the hour is not yet. So, on the next slide, some examples of that in John's gospel.

But now is a turning point because the hour that was once not yet to come has come. It's arrived. And it seems to be prompted by the arrival of these Greeks in verse 20, who are going up to

worship God at the temple as part of the Passover festival.

[4 : 58] And so, these Greeks are God-fearers, but they're not Jews. And if you weren't a Jew, then you're part of the Gentile world. Most of us here, I think most of us are non-Jews, which means we're Gentiles.

And back in verse 19, if you have a look in your Bibles there, the Pharisees actually already complained that the whole world had gone after Jesus. They meant all of Jerusalem, the Jews, had gone after Jesus to, you know, wave palm branches and call him the King of Israel.

But the irony is, with these Greeks arriving, who represent the Gentile world, it really is as though the whole world has now come after Jesus.

But how does their arrival prompt this hour? Well, because up until now, Jesus has only revealed his glory as King of Israel.

Remember verse 13? That's what they praised him. Blessed is the King of Israel. And up until this point, he's only offered life from death to Jews.

[6 : 02] That's what the raising of Lazarus was about, as we've seen over the last two weeks. But with the arrival of these Gentiles, it means it's now time to reveal his glory, not just as King of Israel, but King of the world.

And to offer life from death, not just to the Jews, but to the Gentiles, like these Greeks. But how will Jesus reveal his glory to them?

What does this hour of glory that has come refer to? Well, simply, his death. Have a look at verse 24, where he uses a metaphor for it.

Verse 24. Here is a farming analogy where he's talking about his death that brings life.

And so just as a seed dies, it kind of cracks open and it produces a new sprout. So Jesus's death will produce new life.

[7 : 13] Now, I'm not a biologist, so I don't know how exact this is, but I did try and find a picture for you. So here's a seed that's cracking open. And so in a sense, it's dying. But as it does so, it produces new life.

And that plant will then grow and produce much fruit, as the text says literally, or many seeds, as our version says. Well, again, so too, Jesus will die in order to bring new life.

And not just to Jews, but to Gentiles. And produce many Christians, much fruit for God, who will enjoy life eternal, like us.

But for us to enjoy this life eternal, we must follow in his footsteps and die too. And not just, not for others rather, but to ourselves.

Have a look at verse 25. It doesn't use the word die, but it kind of refers to it. Anyone who loves their life will lose it. While anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life, you see.

[8 : 21] The language of love and hate is about priority, about who we serve as our king. And it's strong opposite language, you know, love and hate, because it's a matter of life and death.

Equally strong opposite language, if you like. And Jesus says, those who love their lives, such that they serve themselves as king, will lose it.

I remember one family Christmas with my extended family. We were doing that Chris Crinkle thing where you pick a name out of a hat or something or other. And whoever's name you pick out, that's who you buy the present for.

I'm sure you're familiar with the idea. But one year I picked out my own name. And instead of putting it back or telling one, I just kind of thought to myself, finally, I can buy what I want this year. No more socks and undies. And so I kept it and kept quiet. And as Christmas approached, I somewhat shamefully spent a lot more money on myself, because it was for myself, than I would have spent on someone else.

[9 : 23] And then I wrapped it up and wrote on the label, to Andrew, love from Andrew. And then I opened it at Christmas time and thought it was hilarious. Boy, did I get in trouble from my mum.

The point is, when we love ourselves, then that's who our king is, ourselves. That's who we serve as king, ourselves.

Doing what we want, like buying expensive gifts that we shouldn't be. But then we'll be in an eternity of trouble. 4 verse 25, we will lose our life.

You see, we'll have to give an account of all our selfish or sinful decisions that we have made as our king on judgment day. And it won't bode well for us.

We will lose our life. Verse 25. And so instead, we are to not love our lives, but hate our lives. Not in the sense of being depressed or thinking we're terrible or hating the way we look.

[10:22] No, not like that. But in the sense of not serving ourselves as king. But serving Jesus instead, in the sense of dying to ourselves as king.

Now, this is not always easy to do, is it? Jesus says, my way is to forgive that person when our way, if we were king, would be to give them the boot and the backside or whatever it is.

Jesus says, you need to follow my priorities about how you spend your time and your money and your weekends and what you do with your friends and so on.

Whereas we want to do what we want to do. It's not always easy. But here's the thing. Jesus never asks us to do something that he himself isn't or wasn't willing to do.

He himself denied himself and followed his father's will rather than his own. We'll see this in a moment. And what's more, verse 26, it's worth serving him as our king.

[11:25] Whoever serves me must follow me. There's the kingship idea. And where I am, my servant also will be. My father will honor the one who serves me.

See what he says? Whoever serves and follows Jesus as their king will end up where Jesus is. Heaven. And what's more, that we will be honored by God himself.

And not just for an hour, but for eternity. It's hard to kind of grasp how amazing this is. It's like the creator of the universe honoring us little sinners.

It's extraordinary. We'll come back to that at the end. But for now, why is the moment of Jesus's glory in history, the hour, his death?

I mean, if I asked you at the start of the service, pick the moment that reveals Jesus's greatness, his glory, I wonder how many would have picked his death. Oh, no, I probably would have picked his greatest miracle, or perhaps even his resurrection.

[12:35] But here, it's his death. Why? Well, because of what his death does. I point to verse 27. At now my soul 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. Father, glorify your name.

Here we see that Christ's approaching death is no picnic. His soul is troubled, whereas for us, our souls are troubled at the hour of our dentist appointment, or the hour of our presentation at work, and understandably, the hour of surgery, or something like that.

But Jesus's hour involves so much more. For he's not only going to die physically, but as he dies, he's also going to suffer all of God's judgment for all of our sins.

This was no small thing. And yet, he denied himself and followed his father. He prays, no, not save me, but Father, glorify you, your name.

[13:48] And given the seriousness of what he's about to suffer, is that not an extraordinary thing to pray? If it was me, I'd be going, you know, save me, save me.

Absolutely. But you see, Jesus knows the reason he came was for this very hour, his death. And so, despite the enormity of it, he denies himself, obeys, and prays, not for his own salvation, but for his father's glory.

Now, does that not reveal his greatness to us, that he would do that? But Jesus's approaching death not only reveals his greatness of character in denying himself and following his father, it's also an opportunity for the father to reveal his character too.

And so, God answers his prayer in the rest of verse 28. Then a voice came from heaven, I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again. God has already glorified, that is, revealed the greatness of his name through Jesus's ministry, his teaching, and his miracles.

But God will reveal his own greatness again through Jesus's death. For in Christ's death, God will reveal the depth of his love for us, the greatness of his grace to us.

[15:10] I mean, can you think of another event in history that shows us God's greatness more than the cross shows us?

I can't. But Christ's death not only reveals his own glory in terms of his obedience to his father, not only reveals the father's glory in terms of his love for us, but it also reveals Christ's achievements for us.

Verse 31. Now is the time for judgment on this world. Now the prince of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

Here, Jesus's death achieves three things, doesn't it? Firstly, he deals with judgment, which is what I think is happening in the first part of verse 31. He says, Now is time for the judgment on the world. [16:15] Only he's going to take it. It's as though the end time judgment we deserve for our sins has been brought forward and poured out on Jesus for us.

Does that not reveal his greatness? That he's willing to do that for us? What's more, since he's taken our judgment for our sins, then he also defeats the devil.

That's who the prince of this world is. And the devil's greatest power is to accuse us of sin and demand our judgment. But now that Jesus has paid for our sins and taken our judgment, then there's nothing left for the devil to accuse us of or demand of us.

Instead, the devil is defeated. Christ has paid it all. Oh, sure, he can still deceive us, which is why we need the truth of the Bible and keep reading it and remembering it.

But he's defeated and his fate is sealed. From the last day, verse 31, he will be driven out of the world completely.

[17:21] Defeated at the cross, fate sealed, guaranteed to be driven out on the last day. And again, does this not reveal Christ's glory? He does this for us.

And thirdly, it says he will be lifted up. And when he is, he will draw all people to himself. Earlier in John's gospel, he uses similar language in chapter 3, verse 14, which alludes to our first reading, where just Jesus said he must be lifted up, just as Moses lifted up the snake on the pole.

I remember from the first reading, the Israelites sinned, snakes came along, God provided a savior in the way of a pole and a snake. Everyone who looked to the snake was saved from death and lived.

Well, here's Jesus. He will be lifted up from the earth on a pole called the cross. And everyone who looks to him will be saved from eternal death and given life instead.

Indeed, it's his death that enables Jesus to draw all people to himself, forgiven, part of God's family. By all people, John doesn't mean literally every single person, but as he often does, all peoples, people from all nations, if you like, Jews and Gentiles like these Greeks, who were coming to search for him, which said, signal to Jesus, I have to die so I can draw them to myself, so that they can see me as the king of the world who offers them life from death.

[18:58] In May last year, there was another school shooting in the US. I think it was a university, North Carolina. And one of the stories coming out from it was about a guy called Riley Howell.

I think here he is, pictured. Apparently, after the shooter had already killed one student, Riley then jumped onto the shooter to wrestle him and to protect him, or sorry, to protect others from him.

And of course, he died in the process. One of the news line headlines, this is the US 7 News, said, his sacrifice saved lives.

And in doing so, it revealed the glory or his greatness of character, didn't it? In fact, the headline goes on to call him a hero. But how much more so the sacrifice of Christ?

Without wanting to take anything away from that, how much more so the sacrifice of Christ, who suffered much more than being shot and saved many more people than a class of students?

[20:02] And in doing so, revealed even greater greatness of character and glory. You see, more than any other moment, the moment of his death reveals his glory, his greatness.

It's why so many of our songs rightly speak of the cross. It's why Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper so that we might remember. He doesn't say, remember my resurrection, remember my miracles, remember my death.

And given this hour of glory, given all he's achieved for us, then our only response, the only right response is to believe in him. And that's what Jesus urges in the rest of the chapter.

Point three. We don't have time to unpack the rest of this chapter. It's a pretty dense one as it is. So let me just give you a quick overview of the responses. So in verse 34, the crowd actually make the link between Jesus being Messiah or King and Son of Man.

I mean, they've done pretty well. And they've even realized that Jesus is talking about dying by being lifted up. It's just that they don't think the Messiah should die. They thought the Messiah should live forever or remain forever, as they say.

[21:17] And so they're kind of thinking, who are you talking? Which sort of son of man are you talking about, Jesus? This is not what we expected. Jesus, though, doesn't repeat himself.

He just calls on them to believe in him. He's shown them enough already to believe, even if they don't fully understand the nature of his kingship. And so come with me to verse 36. He says,

Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of the light. When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them. Jesus is saying he is the light. And he's helped them to see who he is, just like light helps us to see. He's done it by his words and works, his miracles. It won't get much easier to believe in him than this. And so he urges them to walk or to believe in him before he's gone, before it's too late. And if they do believe, then they'll become children of the light. That is, disciples of Jesus with life eternal. And to emphasize the urgency of it, Jesus, it seems at the end of verse 36, deliberately disappears for a while.

[22 : 29] He goes and hides himself. To make the point, they won't have him for much longer. There is an urgency here to believe. And then in verse 37, it seems despite the evidence, many would not believe in him.

And verse 39, they could not believe in him. Though verse 42, it seems some do believe in him. Pick it up at verse 42.

At the top right hand corner of the page. Verse 42. Yet at the same time, many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees, they would not openly acknowledge their faith.

For fear, they will be put out of the synagogue. For they loved human praise more than praise from God. And so they believed in secret, preferring people's praise than God's.

And actually the word for praise here is literally the word glory. Here's that other idea of glory, being honored or praised. And it's foolish to miss out on glory from God for glory from people.

[23 : 36] And so in verse 44, Jesus reappears now and he cries out in a loud voice, again urging people to believe in him. Before it's too late.

This time, not because he's going to disappear, but because judgment will come. Now for us here this morning, we don't have Jesus in the flesh, but we do have him in the word.

And there is still an urgency for us to believe, I think. Not because Jesus will one day disappear, but because actually we might.

I mean, did you hear of the train derailment last week? Here it is on the slide. I think it was last Thursday. 153 passengers who caught the train from Sydney to Melbourne did not expect for it to derail that day, did they?

And the two train drivers of the train did not expect to die that day. You see, we never know what will happen. So there's still an urgency to believe before it's too late.

[24 : 48] And so do you. Do you trust in Jesus? And for us who do, then secondly, we are to believe not secretly, but openly.

Whether at home or work, or even at a restaurant, you should be open about saying grace at a restaurant. I know it feels awkward. I feel it too, but we shouldn't be ashamed of Christ.

For glory from God will far outweigh any weird looks or glory from people. A few years ago, we were in Sydney and we met Tony Abbott.

And one of my kids politely asked him for a photo. And because she asked so politely, Mr Abbott praised her and said, oh, you've got a lovely, polite young lady there. Of course you can have a photo.

And so she got a photo with him. Here she is. She got a selfie with and praise from the former Prime Minister of Australia. But as nice as that was, it doesn't count for much today.

[25 : 56] In fact, I wanted to show you the photo, but we can't find it anymore. It's gone. But praise or glory from God, the current Prime Minister of the universe, and not a photo, but a place in his new creation.

Come on. That's got to far outweigh any praise from people, doesn't it? We had to practice our belief openly, not secretly, knowing that God will glorify us.

And we, thirdly and finally, we had to continue to follow and serve Christ, like we saw back in verse 25 and 26, dying to self, serving him as our king, just as he denied himself and followed his father. And when it's hard, not only look to our future, where God will honour us, glorify us, but also look back to the cross to see Christ's glory, his greatness, that we might remember it's worth serving him.

We can often forget his greatness at the cross, can't we? I remember making a comment to my wife, Michelle, about not thinking that the births of our children were all that bad.

[27 : 21] Do you ever know when you start to say something out loud and inside your head's going, stop, stop, bail out, bail out, and it's just too late. It was one of those times. But she very graciously reminded me of what really happened.

I kept quiet from then on. But the point is, we often forget the huge things in history, including Christ's death, how big it was, how great it revealed his glory to be.

And so we had to look back and remember his greatness, look at the cross and see it, so that we might always remember it's worth serving him. Let's pray.

Our gracious Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for this reminder this morning of the cross of Christ, which reveals his glory, his greatness to us.

Father, we pray that you would help us to keep reflecting on it, that we might be encouraged to keep following and serving him as our servant king.

[28 : 33] We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.