

The Loss and Gain of Life in Christ

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[0 : 0 0] I would like you to turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 12, and I want to read verse! 20 through 26 and have you follow along. John chapter 12, verse 20 through 26.

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 up 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. 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. Let's pray. Father, as we come to you this morning with the Word in hand, thankful that you have given to us the Scriptures, clear and settled in the heavens, that we come with dependence upon your Spirit, enabling us to have open hearts and understanding hearts that we might hear and behold glorious truths out of your Word. Those who are here that know the Lord Jesus, join in praying together that as we learn more about the Lord, that we would also grow in our love for Him and our willingness to serve Him and our obedience and our submission to

His supremacy, that we would be satisfied together. And those who are here that have not come to faith yet, my prayer has been, and I know that this fellowship joins together in praying for that same end, that today, this day, would be the day of salvation for them, that your Spirit would bring them to see the darkness and despair of their soul and understand that there is no help apart from the work of Christ and from their calling upon His name as Lord and Savior. I pray that the teaching of your Word would be marked by the enabling of the Spirit of God and that your people would task together with me, praying for me, praying for me, and for the Word's impact in their own lives and also in the lives of others. And we thank you for this in advance. In Jesus' name, amen. Earlier in the week, last week actually, ended up in a very situation, very interesting situation, having a conversation with a man.

Started out by his saying to me, what day is it? What day is it? He was a little kind of discombobulated and took me a second to figure out why he was asking, but as things played on, I said, it's Saturday. And he said, oh, oh, good. I said, okay. And I said, would you like some oatmeal? He said, absolutely.

And the conversation played on, and I ended up actually having an opportunity to talk to him a little bit about the Lord. And at the start of the conversation, he said to me, I start out an atheist, and I moved to be an agnostic, and I've become a Christian. That sounded just tremendous. Yes, I like that. Except he had already told me that he'd been drunk last night, and that's why he needed to know what day it was. Now, I want you to know that Christians do all kinds of bad things.

[4 : 1 9] How many of you have made mistakes and sinned before? Okay. Okay. Most of us probably haven't been wasted all night, but we've done lots of things that are not an exact test of our faith.

But here was a guy who started out, you know, letting me know about his previous problem, and then eventually ended up talking about the Lord, and that kind of led into his, oh, yeah, I'm a Christian. So I asked him just a very practical question. So how's that going for you?

You follow what I'm saying? How's it working out? Well, I'm not really there, you know. I said, well, would you like to talk about it? No, I'm good. Off he went.

I bring that up because what we are looking at this morning is a passage of Scripture that is not written to the unbeliever.

And it is a passage that clearly indicates what following Christ actually means. One of the sweet truths of the gospel is that salvation brings change to us.

[5 : 39] From the moment of our broken heart that brings us to repentance and calling upon the name of the Lord for salvation, we have a change of address. We no longer are doomed to spend eternity in hell paying for our own sins, but because of the finished work of Christ, we have the absolute certain prospect of eternal joy and glory in Christ's presence.

We also are a different person. Now, that doesn't mean that all the changes that will take place have already come about in a practical sense, but it does mean that we are not who we used to be.

And as we continue in growing in our faith, we see more and more of the work of Christ in our lives and an affection for Him. And without question, one of the things that should characterize the person and does characterize the person who is a true believer is that they can look in the rearview mirror and see that things are different than they used to be.

This passage this morning is going to help us understand and really, in practical terms, gauge, evaluate the authenticity of our own faith.

I will tell you as well that this passage is a convicting passage and one that will make you uncomfortable if you are yielded to the Spirit and the Spirit enables me to preach with Bible authority and humility.

[7 : 21] I've got to tell you that one of the things that characterizes Tim Kenoyer's general study of the Scriptures is that there's seldomly a week that goes by that I don't say, this is the best passage.

I'll tell you that. I have to say that this week I had to add something that was very pertinent to my own heart. I had to say, in addition, this is the best passage.

I had to say, this is a passage that makes Tim Kenoyer uncomfortable and called me to repentance and to change. We'll see how that plays out in your own life, okay?

Well, let's look at the passage and recognize, first of all, that as we dive in here and look at verse 20 and play out a little bit, we recognize that this passage tells us about Christ's global impact.

It's appropriate for us to recognize that what takes place in this passage is a change of direction in Christ's ministry. Earlier, Jesus had sent His disciples only to the 12 tribes of Israel.

[8 : 30] The starting place of His ministry had been to the nation of Israel, and over and over again, He made it clear that His presentation and His offer and His ministry was directed towards the nation of Israel, to the Jews.

You'll remember when the Syrophenician woman came and asked that He heal her daughter. He said, listen, it is unfitting that children's bread be given to the dogs.

And what was her response? I love this one. She said, hey, dogs get crumbs. And Jesus healed that woman's daughter. But His communication was that, hey, the ministry that I'm engaged in here at this moment is particularly to the Jewish nation.

When the Samaritan woman came to Jesus, He made the statement in that passage back in John chapter 4. He said, salvation is of the Jews. So here we have on this great time of feast and the Passover where worshipers were gathering into the city of Jerusalem, up come a group of Greek worshipers.

That's what we're told here. And they ask if they can have an interview with Jesus. Now look at the passage. It says, they came and asked Philip. And Philip, instead of going directly to Jesus, what does he do?

[9 : 55] He goes and consults with someone else because he's just a little uncomfortable. He has all that past instruction from Christ as, hey, listen, here's what you do.

Here's how you minister. And I want you to be focused on the Jewish people and the Jewish nation and be sure that they hear the message of repentance. And so when these Greeks came and asked for the privilege of talking with Jesus, Philip was a little uncomfortable.

And so he goes to Andrew and they probably had a little bit of a discourse together. Well, I'm not sure. What do you think? Let's go ahead. And they both come together to Jesus.

You get that? Here they are. They're in front of Jesus. And they, oh, by the way, there's a couple Greeks. You know, they're not Jews, but they like to talk with you a little bit.

It's very interesting here that these Greeks asked to talk to Jesus. We have no further detail about their motive, but it's fair to surmise that their thinking had been affected by the dramatic sequence of events.

[11 : 10] They had come to worship, but in that period of time, just prior to the cross, let me kind of rattle off some of the very significant things that had happened. For one, Jesus had healed Lazarus, raised Lazarus from the dead, and that was a dramatic, powerful evidence of his deity and his power.

Secondly, he had entered into Jerusalem with all the fanfare and the regalia. Remember that he had come with palm fronds being waved and people shouting out, Hosanna, Hosanna.

They were lit up at the prospect of Jesus coming in as the regal authority and ruler that was going to bring victory and blessing to them. Remember they threw down their coats in front of Jesus, and he came in on a donkey.

That had to be significantly striking to the Greeks. Furthermore, Jesus had cleansed the temple. I want you just to stop and think about this just for a moment.

How many of you know where Mecca is? Anybody know where Mecca is? Hello, we have some Mecca people here. Okay, you know where Mecca is? Can you imagine in your right mind someone going in?

[12 : 28] Well, let's try the Dome of the Rock where the golden... Do you follow what I'm saying? Just imagine someone going in there and cleaning house and getting rid of all the false worship that is going on either at Mecca or in Jerusalem where the Golden Dome is.

Do you think that would cause a little bit of a stir? What do you think? I mean, it would light things up. And the Greeks, no doubt, had heard about Lazarus, about the wonderful entrance, and cleansing the temple.

And so here we have them coming and asking for an opportunity to interview Jesus. They want to learn something. And here is Jesus who takes advantage of this.

And what He does is He points now to the gospel's global impact. In including the Greeks and inviting this conversation instead of repressing it, He makes it very, very clear that the interest of the Greeks was indicative, pointed to the fact that the day was coming when the gospel's impact would not only be of value in the nation of Israel but would be across the entire globe.

I love the fact that the gospel is not limited to an ethnic group or to a physical location like the land of Israel. It has value to every single person who comes into the world.

[13 : 59] And it is supremely important, not just to the nation of Israel, but to all of us because what? Salvation is the very heart of what Jesus came to bring to mankind.

And I like the fact that here is Jesus kind of making an early indication of the fact that the gospel's flow and impact was going to transcend the nation of Israel.

It was going to have global impact. That was actually what was part of the Abrahamic covenant. Isn't that right? God made the commitment and promise to Abraham. He said, through you, all the nations of the world will be blessed.

How? By virtue of Christ being the Savior of all mankind, offering salvation through His finished work on the cross. Now, as we push further into the text, you're there in John chapter 12, you'll find that after this little business of the matter playing out of the question, hey, listen, there are Greeks that want to meet you, I want you to notice Christ's response.

And Jesus answered them. Who is the them? Answer that question in your own thinking. Who was Jesus talking to? He wasn't talking to the Greeks.

[15 : 15] They were kind of standing back, you know, a little bit. There's Philip and Andrew. Can these people talk? Jesus says, hey. I believe Jesus was talking primarily to His disciples who had come with this question, Philip and Andrew.

And He makes it clear that something has come to fruition and is at the point. And here's what Jesus says. My time is here.

My time is now. Now, stop and think for a moment again, and it helps to kind of keep a picture of the larger context of Christ's ministry. Over and over again prior to this, Jesus had made statements like, it's not my time.

My time is not now. It's not the moment. And here He is. In verse 23, Jesus answered them, the hour is come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

I want you to think just for a moment about how Philip and Andrew must have felt when they heard Jesus say, yep, it's time. This is it. I'm going to be glorified. What kind of thinking do you think they had about what Christ's glory was all about?

[16 : 29] Oh, so that you remember, when they had had the Last Supper together, immediately after that tremendously spiritual moment, what had they been bickering about as they left?

Does anybody know? They were fussing with each other about who was going to have the right hand and the left hand and who was really going to be important in the kingdom.

They were all lit up about the prospect of being in charge. That's what they were interested in. And here is Jesus saying, it's time.

I'm going to be glorified. And here they are in the heady rush of thinking, yeah, it's Hosanna time for real. And yeah, we're going to set aside that donkey and he's going to be doing the horse thing and we're going to be part of it.

And then boom. Look at it. Look at it. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

[17 : 37] But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Here in the moment of the Greeks coming and asking for an opportunity to get to know Jesus a little better and Jesus making it clear that all mankind open to the call and the significance of the gospel, here he makes a stunning statement and what he does is he announces that his worth and glory is going to be in his death.

Look at verse 24. Let me read it again. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it bears much fruit. I want you to think with me, secondly, about the fruitfulness of the cross. Jesus was at the very pinnacle of his popularity and yet in the very same sentence where he spoke about his glory, he spoke about his death and its fruitfulness.

The words truly, truly, just so you get clued in on this, are always a signal of something that is really important that is going to be said next. Now I want to frame that.

There's not a word in the Bible that does not have significance. We would agree to that. All scripture is given by inspiration and is profitable. But truly, truly is one of those little signals that the Spirit of God relies upon and Jesus relied upon to say, hey, pay attention to this.

[19 : 19] It's a little bit like when you were in class and the teacher would say, this is going to be on the test. What did all of you do? Yeah, yeah, I've heard that before. No, that's not what you did. What did you do?

You underlined, you know, test, arrow, and when you were reviewing for the exam, what did you do? You went back and looked for what? You looked for those parts that you'd underlined.

So you can, here's what you can do if you, and it's not adding to the Bible when you make a marginal gloss. You know what a marginal gloss is? A little note in the margin says, hey, this is important for me.

This is really something to hold on to. Jesus has some advice you need to pay attention to. Jesus used the very common illustration of what happens to a seed to make the point about his death and what would follow.

You see, a seed's fruitfulness really is impossible apart from its death. It doesn't happen any other way. I told my wife earlier this morning, actually, I said, hey, over the Labor Day holiday, I actually intend to plant kale and turnip greens or a couple other things.

[20 : 33] You know, fall is coming. How many of you noticed that? It's a weather change. Yes. And so, in order for those seeds to actually do anything and be productive, I have to put them in the ground.

They have to die. And then, something happens. And here is Jesus relying upon that little common fact of farming to make the point that his glory could not be separated from his death.

He made it clear. He made it clear. Glory and death are linked together. And his death on the cross would bring salvation for an unnumbered host, and it would be the means of glory.

I want you to look with me just for a moment. You're there in John, but I want you to turn back to the book of Isaiah. As I was studying earlier in the week and, well, last week, and just pondering the marvel of this text and convicted deeply, I was struck by what the passage in Isaiah opens up for us.

And just, it had a significant contact with me. Look at Isaiah chapter 53 verse 10 and 11.

[21 : 54] Yet, Isaiah chapter 53 verse 10, it was the will of the Lord to crush him. I think in the King James it says, it pleased the Lord to bruise him.

And you stop and think about that. I mean, how many of you as fathers have had to spank your sons? Don't raise your hands. I'm not looking for who has done and who has not. But I, a father that is guided by the Spirit of God and recognizes that there are times when discipline is necessary would probably confess that in the moment there is no pleasure in what you're doing.

You do it out of obligation, out of necessity. You do it because of the burden of what you know is your responsibility responsibility as a father. If there's any potential of pleasure, it is at the hope that your obedience to the Scriptures are going to bring fruit in that little child's life that are going to be a blessing to that child and to the Lord Jesus.

So it's hard for me to imagine what this passage actually says about God the Father in terms of His pleasure and His satisfaction in causing His own son to die.

That's what's in view. Isaiah 53, verse 10, it says, Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him. He has put him to grief when his soul makes an offering for guilt.

[23 : 26] He shall see his offspring. He shall prolong his days. The will of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. Out of the anguish of his soul.

He shall see and be satisfied. By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous. Do you get a thrill when you think about that?

Here's what's being said. Back in the book of Isaiah, it says this, number one, that Christ was a sacrifice and made an offering for guilt.

How was guilt satisfied in the Old Testament? Does anybody have an idea? You had to make a sacrifice. You see, here's the idea that we need to get our hands around.

Underneath and behind the reality of our own sinfulness is that something has to be done about that sin. I've got to tell you, throwing coins in an offering plate don't do it.

[24 : 25] Saying that you're a pretty good person doesn't do it because the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked and there is no way that a man can redeem his heart by his own activity and his own effort.

The infinite offense of sin deserves an infinite penalty. That is a mathematical equation. Does that make sense to you? And only the infinite endurance of suffering in hell or the infinite blood of Christ will bring about satisfaction to the debt that sin creates.

And here is the Scripture making it clear to us that Christ by his offering is going to satisfy the debt and look at verse 11 and it says, and make many to be accounted righteousness.

That word accounted means that his righteousness is put over on my account. why is it that I can say with absolute confidence that there is thou therefore no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus?

It is because the righteousness of Christ was placed on the account of the sinner who is repentant and calls upon the name of the Lord.

[25 : 53] And so you look at this passage and you recognize here that Jesus is making it clear going back to the passage in John chapter 12. He is making a statement that listen I am going to die.

They didn't expect that. They'd heard him say it many times but he made it very very clear that he was going to die and that as a result of his death those who came to faith would be the fruit of his sacrifice and be the fruit the outcome the product the blessing that came from his willing sacrifice.

So let me ask you a practical question because the remainder of the sermon is not aimed at unbelievers but is aimed at you who are here who know Christ and I would say that the vast majority of you would say I know Jesus yeah I'm one of them.

I want you to recognize that what Jesus is going to say next really puts us on the spot of asking ourselves the question am I the fruit of his sacrifice for sin? Ask yourself that question am I the fruit of his sacrifice for sin?

Jesus had this statement made by his disciples these people want to come and meet you and talk with you Jesus said yep it's now time that I'm going to be glorified how?

[27 : 16] I'm going to die my death is going to produce fruit are you the fruit of his sacrifice for sin?

That brings us to the third thing that I want you to recognize it starts out there in verse 20 where the Greeks came and said alright we want to see Jesus now here we are looking at verse 25 and 26 whoever loves his life loses it whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life if anyone serves me are you in the anyone?

are you that? 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 here's the question am I one of the anyone?

is that fair? am I an anyone? am I a person who really knows Christ? here were the Greeks they wanted to know more about Jesus they were interested in knowing this spectacular newsworthy individual and he says listen it's time I'm going to be glorified and my glory is going to be directly linked to my dying for other people what has taken place so far in this passage is Jesus bringing attention to the cross but let's take it further now what he says is the fruit of faith produces people who act like me do you get that?

the last two verses are really for us as believers to kind of double check to see whether or not we are what we say we are the Greeks wanted to understand Jesus better and he wanted to be very clear that his disciples in particular understood what following him really meant knowing Jesus means following Jesus and bringing fruit to his glory you want to see him then follow his path take his life and walk with him be fruit that brings glory to him and be one who by virtue of the life that you live evidences the transforming power of the cross so what does true faith produce?

[30 : 00] what does true fruit look like? it would be wrong to skip over this passage and not have it brought to bear on our lives personally and I got to tell you I was listening earlier last week to John Piper preaching on this passage and remember I said that this passage is a great one but it's also deeply convicting true faith is hard let's get that clear in our minds it would be wrong not to declare the truth that Jesus had here for us that following him is costly and hard I every now and then just to kind of intrigue and entertain my soul I kind of skip through channels that have a lot of televangelists on them you know wonderful preaching about how I can have a better house and fly in a jet and you know all that kind of stuff you know it's a really popular stuff and do you realize that the health and wealth gospel is thriving today around the world and you know what when you listen to these guys preach you kind of wonder what in the world was Jesus talking about about sacrifice where's the truly truly in all of that listen to what

Jesus had to say about what it means to follow him for one we choose death look at the passage whoever loves his life loses it what I'd like to follow Jesus if it means I get something for that in return hey that's not wrong thinking you're thinking I'm wrong wait God does not call us to sacrifice without promise of reward the problem is is we end up being far too short sighted I'll never forget reading in Desiring God about a missionary couple that arrived from years on the field broken and spent by their ministry I think it was in Africa and they happened to be arrived they happened to be arriving at the same time that some significant dignitary was arriving and the band was there to welcome this individual as he got off the steamship and as he is walking off the band strikes up and they're giving all this fanfare and the wife commented to the husband there's nobody here to greet us and he said

I'm not home yet we're not home yet let's be honest serving Jesus is hard you choose death there is truth in the fact that salvation is a death of our past and our corruption but it is also a conscious choice that we make from day to day of putting our old desires and habits to death and can I tell you that keeps on going on for the rest of my life I continue because of what Jesus has done in my life of choosing to not do things and put to death the flesh that is at battle and at war with my own heart for things that don't last forever as Judith and I were praying this morning and spending time together I talked about the fact that that we look forward to a time when we can be invested again with ministering to international students

I love going out to the airport and picking them up people who hardly know a thread of English and begin to minister to them why highly expensive costly proposition but one that has gospel import and impact and when we choose to follow Christ we choose to die there's another statement that Jesus makes he says we choose to hate this life in this present age there is a seduction in the world around us hey we all entertain it don't we it used to be it used to be when we wanted to indulge our fancies and we wanted to become better consumers we had to rely on catalogs remember those old days I mean Sears and Robux catalogs how many of you lived with fantasies of what you could buy from this is a previous generation most of you don't even remember those days now when you go on

Facebook when you go on the internet when you go to CNN when you go to Fox News over in the margin guess what there is there's advertisement and just try this just click on one single item on Amazon and express an interest and you begin getting emails out of the ether and it's like hey we saw that you were interested in that sweeper and we want you to know that it is the very best sweeper that anyone in the world can possibly have and if you just click here you can buy it with PayPal you know how it is here's what you do you choose to put that life to death you choose to follow Jesus in the cross look at what he says here in the passage he says if anyone serves me he must follow me he must follow me we are far too focused in indulging ourselves in our own fantasies to the pleasure of our private individual interests and we're not about the cross there's one more thing we choose to serve look at the passage if anyone serves me and by the way

[36 : 19] I'll take a cheap shot here next week pastor shearer begins to preach for four weeks there's no cheap shot in that part but I am going to be responsible for taking care of the nursery and I am going to invite all of you to serve in the nursery you hear me there will be some personal invitations some of you have been on the periphery you know what periphery means it means way outside I'm going to put my arms around you guys I'm going to speak politely to you women and I'm going to say hey over there every now and then there are some of you haven't been in a nursery ever since your kids left you know it's like I'm not doing that yes you are at least I'll invite you pastor Saul is smiling and grinning because he had that responsibility previously right oh okay we're going to choose to serve I want you to see some other thing not only is true faith hard but true faith is glorious we live fruitful lives whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life we live fruitful lives can

I tell you that the believer lives with an ambition and expectation of what is coming ahead is that the way you're living are you living with such an expectation that your children even now are despairing of how many dumpsters get rid of the trash you collected no we're living with an ambition for eternity we keep our lives in eternity I want you to notice something else there in the passage it says those who follow Jesus join him in glory where I am there will my servant be also how much do you think about the day that you are going to be with!

Christ in glory you know I was talking with a believer earlier in the week last week and he was commenting about how much he looked forward to heaven truth of matter is he had 17 surgeries and as we were having conversation about life he brought up how much he was looking forward to his new body I think 17 surgeries is fairly significant and I said to him you know what it's an indication of our own frailty that the thing we sometimes think about is so superficial the pleasure of heaven will not primarily be a new body and I can say that as a 68 year old the pleasure of heaven will be seeing Jesus where I am there will my servant be finally look at what it says at the last part the father will honor him psychologists came up with a very interesting test to determine the probability of a child succeeding in life do know what the test is it's a marshmallow test simple you put a kid in a room set him at a table and put one marshmallow on the table and you say to the kid hey you can eat this marshmallow now if you wait

I'll reward you the kid who has an inability to think beyond the moment grabs and gobbles the marshmallow at the moment the kid who waits indicates by that perspective a level of understanding about what may lie ahead there are some of you here this morning that profess to know Christ but you're one marshmallow Christians it's all about now it's all about what you have your investments will not travel with you your hobbies will not travel with you your trophies will not travel with you I remember burying being at the funeral for Bill Brock who was the founder of this church and as

I was there at the graveside with the family I just looked over there to the side and there was John Kenneth Galbraith headstone do anybody know who Galbraith is probably this current generation he was a heavy lifter along the lines of Bill Gates etc an incredibly rich man buried in a plot no bigger than Bill had and has I know Bill's in heaven and beloved as you look at this passage here's the thing that should be undeniably clear to us those who know Christ are invested in the future those who know Christ have ambition for what lies ahead do you see in your life the clear indicators of a willingness to put away and put to death things that encumber your present life and service or are you so occupied with the moment that it's fair to say you should probably be asking yourself the question do

[42 : 18] I really know Christ because here's the characteristic Jesus said it very clearly whoever loves his life loses it if anyone serves me he must follow me let's close in prayer our father God this morning as we have attended to the word I recognize that it is primarily for the believer that is here today to challenge them to think consciously and deliberately does my life produce the fruit of faith can I see that Christ has made a difference in my ambitions and my affections in the things that I talk about in the interest that I have in my willingness to serve there may be some today that are here that recognize when they compare their heart against the model of scripture there may be some that say

I have drifted away from my first love and this morning the spirit of God is convicting me that needs to be restored there may be some here that do not know Christ that they have not yet come to faith and this morning it would be our plea that your spirit would draw them to the cross and see!

the emptiness and darkness of their soul has no remedy apart from Jesus we ask this in Jesus name Amen