

The hour has come

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[0 : 00] Ruth, thank you. I wonder if someone asked you to provide one photo of yourself, just one photo of you that showed who you are and what you're about.

! Maybe say you're finally setting up a Facebook account and you're looking to pick a Facebook cover photo which displays what you want people to see and know about you.

Maybe a moment of triumph or glory comes to mind, winning the cup final and roaring with joy. Or you on your graduation day in your black robe. Or sitting in your first car you've bought yourself with your earnings. That's my picture. That's who I am. This is me.

Maybe you pick a holiday snap on the beach. Or a wedding day photo. Or you on a sofa surrounded with family. That's my profile picture. That sums up who I am.

Maybe there's a picture somewhere of you absorbed in your work, your life's work, doing what you do best, which captures what you're about. I wonder what you go for. One picture, one moment that displays to the world who you are.

[1 : 20] Well ask this. What if God the Son, Jesus Christ, were to pick his own Facebook cover photo?

What if Jesus were to pick one ultimate glory moment from his life that captures and displays who he really is? What if Jesus Christ, who would think it would be?

In our Bible reading today, chapter 12, verse 23, gives us the answer. The hour has come, Jesus says, for the Son of Man to be glorified. This is the moment.

In Jesus' life and in John's Gospel, everything has been building up to the hour. At the start of his public ministry at the wedding in Cana, Jesus said to his mother, my hour has not yet come.

In chapter 7, Jesus' disciples urged him to go up to Jerusalem and show yourself to the world. And Jesus replied, my time is not yet here. In chapter 8, no one seized him because his hour had not yet come.

[2 : 33] Finally, in chapter 12, verse 12 onwards, Jesus comes publicly into Jerusalem. Blessed is the King of Israel, people shout, and crowds spread the word and many go out to meet him.

Jesus is going public in a big way. He's going global. In verse 20, there are some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival and they come to Philip with a request. End of verse 21, we wish to see Jesus.

To which Jesus replies, finally, in verse 23, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

To be glorified means for you to be displayed for who you really are. Think of our King, King Charles III.

There he is on the screen. He sometimes walks around just looking like any old, friendly, quite posh gentleman. And yet, the hour came when he was glorified.

[3 : 37] He was shown to be who he really is in all his majesty and splendour. Jesus says in verse 23, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

He says now, right now, you will see me in all my kingly splendour. This is my moment. This is my moment. This is my Facebook photo. This is my glory. This is how you'll see me as I really am.

You know the twist and shock of John 12? We've spoken about it this morning. You see the kingly splendour of Jesus as he dies on a cross.

It is as he is crucified and it's as he dies in agony and shame that you see the Son of God in all his glorious splendour. I want us to focus on this this morning.

Notice how Jesus spells this out in this passage. In verse 23, look down with me, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. How will his splendour be shown?

[4 : 52] Verse 24, very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

Now he will die. In verse 27, the hour having come, Jesus confesses, 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. This hour troubles Jesus and shakes him, for he will die. And die an appalling death.

Because, verse 32, And I, when I'm 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.

What kind of death? He will be lifted up on a cross. Familiarity with the cross, because that's what Christians talk about, maybe dulls us to the horror of crucifixion.

[6 : 04] When Emily's football team plays a game, they're always instructed to remove all their jewellery under 16's Histon Hornets. But still, every week, they turn up with nose rings and multiple earrings and necklaces. And there's this great removing of jewellery moment that takes five minutes before the match.

A few weeks ago, one girl took off a stunning silver cross necklace with diamond-like stones in it. And the manager handed it to me to look after, because you're the vicar, Chris. And he said to me as he handed it, it's beautiful, isn't it?

And maybe it wasn't quite the moment, or I wasn't thinking, or maybe it was. I said, well, actually, it's an instrument of torture. I think it brought him up short. It is.

That is, having been flogged brutally, the criminal or victim would be led out in public. And his body held down and stripped naked, most likely. And they would drive nails through the hands, wrists into the cross piece, and nail his feet to the upright.

And then, having been impaled on the wood, he would be lifted up to hang there. Crucifixion is, quote, the most cruel method of execution ever practiced.

[7 : 16] For it deliberately delayed death until maximum torture had been inflicted. Not just torture, though. There is shame in the cross. Can you imagine it?

There's public shame as a man is lifted up naked to die for all to see. There is no hiding. A crucified one, pinned there, becomes dehumanised, degraded.

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified, says Jesus.

Now you will see God in all his kingly splendour. This King of the Jews, one person wrote, has no crown, no jewel, no orbs, no sceptre, no ring.

He is just a worthless, wasted, broken, naked body, hanging in shame on the tree. And yet, Jesus can say that this moment of shame, it is his supreme moment of glory.

[8 : 38] Back in verse 27 again, as Jesus shakes at the prospect of what is now here. 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. I will go to die, Father. I will go to die, Father.

Think how brave is the Son of God here. I will go to die, and as I do, glorify your name. As I love you, Father, and obey you, and lay down my life in death, may you display who you truly are.

You who loved the world and sent me. And then a voice came from heaven, I have glorified my name, and I will glorify it again. Maybe you're quite new to the Christian faith, and you're investigating what the Bible says and Christians believe, and you do want to know.

That's why you're here this morning. You want to know God. You want to see something of Jesus, who he really is, what he's really about. You see the Lord Jesus Christ, you see God the Son in all his kingly splendor, as he dies in shame on a cross.

[10 : 03] This is his moment of glory. The cross is his throne. The crucifixion is his coronation.

He reigns in glory as he hangs on the tree. To which we might say this morning, I hear that, I hear that.

But how can it be? Like if I understand just a little of the shame and horror of the cross, how can that, this moment of death and defeat and degradation, how can that display the glory of God to the world?

Well, listen again to Jesus' teaching here. See Jesus' kingly splendor as he dies on a cross and gives life to many.

In verse 23 onwards, Jesus teaches us how to look properly, how to really see his death, and how to really see what is going on as he dies in shame.

[11 : 20] And what happens as he dies obediently to his father in shame? It is glorious. Look first at verses 23 and 24. See how his death gives life.

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Here it is. Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed.

But if it dies, it produces many seeds. It bears much fruit. What is Jesus talking about?

You don't need to be a gardener or a farmer to get the point of what he's saying. He's saying there can be no fruit and no harvest without the death of a seed.

So look, here is a, oversized so you can see it, single grain of wheat. And just holding it in your hand, a little grain of wheat, the life within this seed will never be released.

[12:26] You'll never get a field full of wheat, will you? As you stand there as a farmer just holding a bit of grain. That's like basic farming, I guess. I get that. Only with the seed falling to the ground and dying and buried in soil will the life be released.

Only when the seed dies and is buried will fruit and many seeds come up, a whole field full eventually. That's the picture, that's the image.

Here's the truth. John's Gospel is all about God the Father sending his son a grain of wheat who has life in himself into the world. And the Lord God sends his son so that an uncountable number of many people can receive eternal life through him.

You can enjoy life in relationship with God now. You can have life that stretches beyond death and into eternity. That is God's plan. That is God's plan.

A whole field full, a whole world full of people like you and me today in the 21st century forgiven and restored to God and enjoying life with God forever.

[13:38] And the point is here, without the death of Jesus, without the death of the seed, there can be no life released. No fruit, no seeds, no world full of people restored to God.

Without his death, no seeds, no fruit, no life. But with his death, many seeds, much fruit, a whole world full.

And the next time you have a whole wheat sandwich, think to yourself, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, there is no wheat field.

There is no sandwich. Look around you at St John's. Look around the world. Look around the world. At Christian believers who were once cut off from God and dead, yet now have the life of God in us. Unless Jesus dies, no forgiveness and no life for any of us ever. We will die eternally.

[14:45] But he did die. The seed. In agony and shame and through this one glorious death, he gives life.

He gives eternal life to many. You are meant to say, wow, how glorious and splendid he is, that he would hang there and do that for us.

Yet it is such a mystery, isn't it? The cross. In churches like ours, we like to make things as clear as we can and that is good.

It is just so mysterious. So paradoxical. Because his death on the cross, it looks like one thing.

And yet it is another. The cross is his throne. It is a place of shame. Yet it displays his splendour.

[15:51] The cross is death. Yet from it flows life. In verses 31 and 32, partway down, Jesus continues to teach those who would listen why his cross, the cross, is such a great moment of glory.

God the Father, having spoken from heaven, I will glorify my name. Jesus says to the crowd in verse 30, this voice was for your benefit, not mine. 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. Do you see this?

Do you see this? As Jesus dies on the cross? Just work through it with me. See him firstly here in his kingly splendour, judging this world.

You would think, wouldn't you, as you look at the cross, that the world is judging him. Arrested, questioned, charged, condemned, then handed over to be crucified.

[17:03] The world surely standing in judgment over Jesus. No, says Jesus. As this king hangs on the tree, reigning, now is the time for judgment on this world.

How so? Because in the events of the cross, the dark heart of humanity is publicly exposed and laid bare.

Though the world was made through him, God the Son, John says the world did not recognise him. Rather the world crucified him.

That is, given the chance to murder our maker, the world, the human race in rebellion against God, brackets, we, took our chance.

Publicly, openly, and before his very eyes. Would you and I have acted differently? At the day of judgment proper will come at the end of the age when every deed is exposed and we are brought into judgment.

[18:17] Yet, says Jesus, now, at the cross is the time of judgment. For as this world judges him and pins him up to die, so the cross passes judgment on this world.

We are guilty. We are condemned. We are condemned. See Jesus in his kingly splendor, judging the world, driving out Satan.

And verse 31 again. Now the prince of this world will be driven out. And the prince of this world is Satan, the devil, he who's against God.

And in John's Gospel, through the whole Bible and in life today, Satan is the great deceiver and accuser and murderer. He's alive. He is active. He loves to wrap people like us up in our sins and trap us under God's condemnation, addicted to sinful behaviour.

He loves to see people like us die cut off from God. And surely in the death of Jesus, it looks like Satan has won. Does it not?

[19:33] There's a really terrible scene in C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. I don't know if you've read it. When Aslan the Lion, he's the Christ figure. He is tied down to be killed at the stone table.

And surrounding him are ogres with monstrous teeth and wolves and bullheaded men, spirits of evil trees and poisonous plants. And right in the middle, standing by the table, was the witch herself.

And as the witch raises her knife to slay him, she stooped down and said in a quivering voice, And now who has won? At the cross, it looks as though evil wins.

It looks as though the devil has won. But that's not true. As this king hangs on the cross, Jesus says, Now the prince of this world will be driven out.

As he dies, bearing our sins for us and dying in our place, the Lord Jesus, through his death, once and for all, breaks Satan's power over people like us.

[20:49] Martin Luther, the great German reformer, put it like this, This king is and shall be called sin's devourer and death's strangler, who removes sin and knocks death's teeth out.

He disembowels the devil and rescues those who believe on him from sin and death. That is what Jesus achieves on the cross. He smashes death's teeth out for us.

He disembowels and drives out the devil for us. And he does that so that lastly here in verse 32, he might, when I am lifted up from the earth, draw all people to myself.

In the moment, crowds gather to stare and to mock as he is lifted up to die in shame. And yet, as the Lord Jesus Christ was raised high, dying and reigning in kingly splendour, he was acting.

He was going about his work. Arms wide on the cross, drawing people from every nation to him, to receive the eternal life which flows from him.

[22:08] And this is John 12. This is John 12. This is the action at the heart of the universe, at the heart of reality.

The Greeks come up, they say, sir, we would like to see Jesus. We want to see him. Forgive me for asking just very simply. You want to see him, don't you?

We want to see him as he really is, in all his glory. Well then, look at the cross, if you can.

Because the cross is the moment of glory. Look at the cross and see Jesus' kingly, beautiful splendour.

As he dies in agony and shame, giving life to many, judging the world, driving out Satan and drawing all people to him. This is his great work.

[23:12] This is who he is. This is what he's come into the world to do in obedience to his Father and for you and me and for our salvation. Look at the cross.

Look at the shame. And see him in his glory. But don't just look. Finally, straightforwardly, this is John's Gospel on every page.

Believe in him. In verse 34, having listened to Jesus, the crowd spoke up, We've heard from the law that the Messiah will remain forever.

So how can you say the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man? And then Jesus, knowing exactly what he was about to do, he told them, You are going to have the light just a little while longer.

Walk while you have the light before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in dark doesn't know where they are going. Believe in the light while you have the light, So that you may become children

of light.

[24 : 18] That is, seeing who he is. Seeing what he does in all his glory. Whether you've been a Christian for 50 years or not, Come running to him.

This week, this Easter. Because today the crucified Jesus, who was crucified in shame and glory, He is alive and reigning in heaven.

And he continues to have his arms open wide, offering eternal life to all who believe in him. Accept him. Take him as your Lord and your God who died for you.

And through him, this King who dies in shameful glory. Through him, you receive life. As you are drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ and you become a child of light for all eternity.

Let me lead us in a prayer. And then we're going to sing. The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

[25 : 36] Thank you, our Father, for the words of Jesus Christ here. Knowing exactly what he would do. Going to the cross to die in shame.

That he might win us eternal life. Help us right now as we sing, through this week and on in our lives, To boast only in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And to live with this crucified Saviour as our Lord. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.