John 12:20-36 Early Morning

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Preacher: Rev. James Wagner

[0:00] Please pray with me. God, as the rain comes down on the roof of this church, may your grace rain down upon us and our hearts that we may meekly hear your word and receive you with pure affection and bear forth the fruit of your spirit as you fill and empower us with the gifts for service and keeping in step with you.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please be seated. If you wish, you can turn back in your Bibles to page 899 again.
As you know, Wednesday began the season that we're in now called Lent. We can easily focus on what we should give up in this season, but we also need to focus on what's been given up for us.
So we're going to fix our attention on the goodness and the glory of Christ's cross this season.
That's the sermon series title. We want to glorify and see how God does so in his Son, our Savior, for our redemption through our Lord's death on the cross.
Come to a deeper understanding of why the death of Jesus is at the heart of the gospel, bringing forgiveness of sins and freedom for service in his kingdom, but also to proclaim the cross of Christ faithfully and joyfully and praise of God day in and day out in our lives in a world that's anxious and cynical.
[1:54] In today's reading of John 12, Jesus gives us this really clear and compelling view of the cross. In Jesus' view, it's, as he says, when I'm lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

And John's comment on this is that this is to show what kind of death that Jesus was going to die.
Crucifixion was a disgusting and deterrent in the ancient world.
Remember when I moved from Columbus to Ann Arbor, where Brenda was in school, medical school, and it wasn't the Christian medical and dental society, but the medical school, I think in 94, published an article what it was like to, from a medical perspective, die by crucifixion.
Well, for Jesus, it's a lifting up, an exaltation, an enthronement, a glory. And Jesus turns an awful death into an awesome victory.
The conquered becomes the one who's captivating in order to magnify the grace of the Father with kind of a magnetic love of the Son.
[3:10] And this cross-saturated event is what shapes the world. It's not only the shape of beautiful church buildings in the form of a crucifix, it's not only the shape, also of a spiritual gesture when you go like this.

But it's the shape of our devotion to our Lord. And so in two ways, I want to look at today the way this shapes our life, by service and by walking.
And so first, the service and the honor of the cross-shaped life. For the first time, the Greeks, not just the Jews, want to see Jesus. Look down at verse 20 and read, 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. Up until this point, it was exclusively the Jews.
But now the Greeks turn up for a holy day, a feast. This is kind of surprising. We're told these Greeks were not just seekers, but worshipers. And it's a trigger, because up to this point, Jesus previously has said, My hour has not come three times.
[4:23] And now, the non-Jews show interest in Jesus, and he's got the green light. Jesus asserts, Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

And this means the act and climax is imminent. The work of God isn't just for the chosen people, race, nation. It's for the whole world, creation, and peoples.

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And what is this climactic point? The answer is, of course, glorification. Jesus is about to become coronated, exalted on the cross.
Crucifixion equals glorification. Previously, Jesus had a few close calls with death, but now the hour has come. The Greeks' interest in Jesus moves the plot along, thickens it.
God sent his Son, that is the Son of God, Son of Man, because the Father loved the world. Not just the church, not just Christians, not just Jews.
[5:29] So Jew and Greek alike are about to have their sins addressed and intoned for like never before. And Jew and Greek are the cause of the crucifixion that becomes Christ's glorification.

Death is in full view for Jesus. He asserts parabolically and paradoxically, 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. There's such promise in this. And this was a unique statement then and now.
No leader, public servant, political figure, military general, organizational director can make such a claim like this. Jesus speaks in general terms about his death and the outcome of it because it's like a grain of wheat alone falling, dying, earthing, all alone in order to bear fruit.
And so Jesus' death isn't just pointless, it's purposeful. And at the time, it seemed like nonsense and quite frankly, a waste of a life.
[6:46] But even creation and agricultural metaphors point to the truth and meaning of Jesus' death. So that's his illusion. But he's not deluded.

And this has great implications for Jesus' followers. Of course, the application is salvation for us. The implication spelled out by Jesus isn't just forgiveness of our sins but freedom for service of our Savior.
That's what he's saying in verses 26 when he states, if anyone serves me, then he must follow me. And where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.
So where Jesus is, as we are, as we follow in service. Once saved, then service. There's not salvation in the Christ Christian life apart from service and servanthood.
One of our bishops, Ron Ferris, once said, I heard him very clearly, where there is a need, there is a call to service. Michael Green wrote a book once called, called to service.
[7:59] The honor of God is fulfilled in service and ministry and diakonia. This word there, service three times, well, two times service, one times servanthood, is this word, diakonian.

When we hear that, we actually think of the orders of ministry of that of bishops, presbyters, called priests, but also deacons. And diakonite may be one of transitional or perpetual.
But I'm here to tell you, we are all deacons. We are all servants of the Lord. Not just those set aside, but every one of us, as we follow, we serve Christ.
So, now from service to the second point here, which is walking, and that is walking in the light of the cross-shaped life. Jesus returns to the moment or time or hour in verse 21.
He states, and what shall I say, Father? Save me from this hour? Or save me from this hour? It's a question. But for this purpose, I have come to this hour.
[9:06] Jesus lived a purposeful life, uniquely like no one else. And I don't know what your purpose is, but Jesus' was to die. It was his purpose. Not hopeless, but productive, like this buried sea he alludes to.

This wasn't just fun and games for Jesus. He says, now my soul is troubled. This is not the only time he admits the soul-troubling experience.
He'll also tell his disciples, though, because he's troubled, let not your hearts be troubled. But our Lord was no stoic and admitted the hardship of what he was about to experience on the cross, but not even then, right now.
But not without purpose and meaning and hope. Living with purpose is demanding, not despairing, but of course has its trouble.
So Jesus petitions his Father in Heaven saying, Father, glorify your name. And so this is Jesus' purpose and a good purpose for all who follow Jesus.
[10:18] Then we actually in the reading hear this voice that comes from Heaven. We heard a voice at Jesus' baptism of his Father and his transfiguration and now it comes again for those who have ears to hear.

And what did it sound like? More importantly, what did it say? Not what did it say, what did he say? I have glorified it and I will glorify it again.

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Do you ever wish that you could hear God's voice? Maybe some of you have audibly, maybe inwardly. he has spoken to us. Jesus wants nothing more than his Father's name to be glorified though.
He wants his Father's honor and brilliance and beauty and goodness and truth revealed. And so it's already been glorified before this hour had come in other places like the wedding of Cana as well. But also in every miracle where the name and the nature of the Father is glorified so that we might actually believe the brilliance of God and the beauty.
[11:28] Trust in his truth. Worship his word. But it's yet to be glorified on the cross and then coming from the tomb. And the name and nature of the Godhead three in one climactically glorified on Good Friday and then Easter.

And then consummated again when Jesus returns. But Jesus is judged on the cross in our place so that we don't have to be. And this is where God glorifies his Son and his name.
And so Jesus says now is the judgment of this world. Now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And when I am lifted up from the earth will draw all people to myself.
Here is the purpose and the point of Christ's cross. grace. In verse 34 we see how confusing this is for the Greeks and the Jews. It's a foreign sounding story.
They then, I think it is even for the world of course that we live in now. Suffering like this. A suffering that no one had ever seen before.
[12:38] And the sense of it is impossible to make a part of by other than by faith and by Christ's grace revealed to us. And so Jesus tells us that we're drawn to him by this glory through the cross.

This drawn word is an interesting word. It actually means drag or pull. Not a push but a persuasion. Almost like but not quite like a kind of a kicking and screaming. Not against our wills but persuasive. But not only does the glory of God compel life-giving service the glory of God demands that we walk in it.
And so Jesus says at the end of this text then the light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have light lest darkness overtake you.
The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have light believe in the light that you may become sons and daughters of light.
[13:56] Wow this is an audacious promise to us but also kind of a pull a draw. Of course Adam and Eve walked in the light but then darkness came with sin.

Enoch of course walked with God. The disciples walked with Jesus. Jesus is that light that the disciples for only about another 41 days would actually have with him.
But Jesus spirit assures us that we can keep in step with the spirit and walk in light. Ephesians Paul chapter 5 verse 8 says for at one time you were darkness but now you are light in the Lord.
Walk as children of light for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Paul knows that we can walk in that light.
So the cross of Christ sheds light on the world the world outwardly but also our worlds inwardly because Jesus is the light of the world.
[15:09] So the cross of Christ saves but also shapes our life. Our Lord draws and drives us in service.

Our Lord shines his light upon us to discern what is right in order to walk in fellowship with him and one another. And Lent is the time to put in mind actually as we say on Ash Wednesday the message of pardon and absolution contained in the gospel of our Savior and of the need which all Christians continually have of a renewal of our repentance and faith by self examination repentance prayer fasting and self denial and by reading and meditation upon God's holy word word.
And as we do that this Lent may we also do so with the cross of Christ before us and behind us and beside us which shapes the way we live and move and have our being and service as we walk in the light of Christ.
We speak to you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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