

Saturday evening preparatory service (in-house communions)

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Date: 04 June 2011

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[0 : 00] And that's section from verse 20. These are all sections of God's Word we're all familiar with, but I think again at this particular time, it's very appropriate.

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. 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.

[1 : 07] I think we could all believe that everybody in here tonight would echo the sentiment or echo the request that we find from these Greeks, who said, Sir, we wish to see Jesus.

And I'm sure that over this weekend that you're saying to yourself, There's nothing that I would love more than to see Jesus. If there's one thing that bothers you probably as a believer, it is how little you see of Jesus.

It's what you long for more and more and more. You're saying to yourself, I really, really, really would like to see Jesus better than I do.

And I'm sure many of you think that others are seeing Jesus much more clearly than you are. And I believe that this is one of the great desires.

It's an evidence of a work of grace within a person's heart when they decide to see Jesus. And tonight, your desire isn't simply that you will see Jesus by faith and see him tonight and see him tomorrow by faith.

[2 : 30] But there's this growing desire for the day when you will really see him, when you will be with him forever and ever. Because, you see, the desire that is born in your heart is a desire that will continue and will grow.

It's a desire of grace. And grace gives way to glory. Grace moves into glory. The desire of grace that has begun in your heart now is a desire that will never go away.

And it's a desire that will be fulfilled far and beyond anything that you or I could even begin to imagine. Because one day we shall see him as he is.

And that is our great longing. That is part of what makes the believer so different in this world. Because if you were to go around town tonight and say to people, What is your great hope and desire in life?

You can honestly say my desire, my real desire, is a day I will really see Jesus. I've begun to see him now, just a little, through a glass darkly.

[3 : 41] Get a glimpse of him. See him by faith. But I'm longing for the day when I will see him face to face. Longing for the day when I will be like him.

So this is a desire of grace. It is a desire that has been born by God in people's hearts. And so we find here that these Greeks have come.

They had come to the feast. Now these Greeks, they were Gentiles. They turned proselytes. They had come to embrace the Jewish faith. And they were allowed certain privileges.

They were given certain privileges. But they didn't have the full privilege of the Jew. They were exclusion zones. And they didn't have the full freedom that the Jew enjoyed. How wonderful that we

live in different days.

We live in days where there are no barriers. There are no exclusion zones. There are no Christians at one level and Christians at another level. There are no super Christians there and inferior Christians there.

[4 : 42] We are all one in Christ Jesus. And that is one of the great themes of the Word of God. We find it almost impossible to understand today what it was like way back in New Testament times.

But when Peter first had dealings with the Gentiles, the Jewish church wanted to deal with him. They thought that he had lost his way.

That he was dealing, that he was bringing the gospel and interacting with the gospel with non-Jews. Now to us today, such a concept is appalling.

It is unchristian. It is unbiblical. It is such that we couldn't get our heads around it. But that is how it was. How thankful we do not live in these days. But that we live in a day where the gospel is flourishing and the gospel goes out to all.

And there is this tremendous bonding and binding in Jesus Christ. Anyway, here are these Jews. And their request is that they wished to see Jesus.

[5 : 56] Now as we said, this desire that they had to see Jesus was not a desire to see what he looked like. They could see that anyway. They could see. It wasn't a desire to see what he was like, what the color of his hair or his eyes or what his complexion was like.

They could see that. It was a desire to meet with him. To hear him. To have, as it were, a special time with him. To fellowship with him.

We want, it's almost like a private audience. Or to be part of a fellowship. We want to come in close contact with. We want to be near him.

We want to be with him. And of course, as we said, that is the desire of the church tonight. Desire to see Jesus. And as we said, it is a, it's not a human desire.

Because tonight there are many people who have no, no, no desire for Jesus at all. Jesus doesn't mean anything to them. And that's what it says in the prophecy.

[6 : 59] They saw no beauty in him that they should desire him. Christ means nothing. There is nothing attractive.

Nothing winsome. Nothing powerful. Nothing that they would consider. But you're different tonight. Because Jesus means a lot to you.

You will see that in a moment. Jesus spells out to us just what it means to see himself. To see what it means for him in order for us to see him.

And what it means for us when we do see him. This is what Jesus is saying to us. So this desire that comes within the heart is a desire of grace.

And the work that goes on, the work of regeneration is always the same. Where God works within us all. However, the experience, a patience, what we may term a conversion experience, varies.

[8 : 07] And that's why we must never be crippled by somebody else's testimony. You know, I've heard of people who've gone down in the dumps when they've heard somebody give their testimony.

Because they couldn't follow one step. And they were saying, well, if that's conversion, I've never been converted. What we've always got to remember is that God's spirit, God works within us all. It's God who saves. Where there's the implanting of us, we would say the divine seed. Where God's spirit touches. It's in a moment.

But the outworking of that in our experience varies from passion to passion. And we cannot say, for instance, Lydia.

Lydia couldn't say, I don't think I'm a Christian. Because I didn't have the same experience as Saul of Tashas. And I didn't have the experience of the Philippian jailer.

[9 : 10] Both of them had vehement, violent, almost experiences. So that if you heard their testimony, you would have to say, well, it's so different. Or Lydia would say, it is so different to mine.

And yet all three of them, at the end of the day, it was the same work that took place. God's work. Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened, it seemed to be so gentle.

So tender. So gentle. And yet for the Philippian jailer, he was at the point of suicide. For Saul of Tashas, he was thrown down by this blinding light.

He was blinded, crying on the ground. Who are you? It seems so different. But it's all a work of grace. Grace is grace, whatever they experience.

And this desire, as we say, is a desire that has been created by the Lord. And let me say, you know, some people, some people are questioning their salvation.

[10:16] Maybe some in here tonight are questioning their salvation. Because they go back over, they say to themselves, what if I didn't begin right? What if that experience I had right at the beginning there when I look back, and what if it wasn't a real experience, and that all these years have been deluded?

Well, the great question you have to put back to yourself tonight is this. Do you desire to see Jesus? Is this a genuine, real, heartfelt, sincere desire?

If it is, then that is evidence of the grace that is at work within your heart. Because, as I said, it's not natural. It is only of God.

And the fact that over the years, that desire has continued. It hasn't waned. It's still there. Despite every temptation, and every obstacle, and every hindrance, and everything that has come to derail you, you're still following on day after day after day with that desire.

And that longing to see even more clearly. It's a God-given desire. And God doesn't give us desires to frustrate us.

[11:36] He doesn't give us desires to say, well, I'm going to give you a desire for myself, but I'm not going to give you myself. God never does that. When he gives us the desire for himself, it is in order to give us himself.

If I can say it reverently, the Lord doesn't play games with us. When he begins a work, he will complete that work.

And so, we find here these Greeks are asking, we want to see Jesus. And so, Philip went and told Andrew, and Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

There's a lot that we could say there, but we'll move on. Jesus answered them, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I'm not going to say much on this just now.

Jesus is here talking about this particular hour that the Son of Man has come to be glorified. This is what it was all about. Jesus' mission in this world was all about his substitutionary sacrifice, his death, everything.

[12:47] Everything was coming together to this point. And this was the hour in which he was to be glorified. Now, when you look at the cross of Christ, when you look at Golgotha, and you see the blood, and you see the mangled mess of humanity that Jesus was on the cross, and you hear the screams, and you are to hear the curses from the enemies of Christ, and the mockings, this scene is anything but glorious.

From a human point of view, there is a lot that is, you could almost say, revolting. If you or I turned a corner and came face to face with this crucifixion scene, our eyes would virtually pop out of our heads.

Our, no doubt, would start retching. And we would want to run away. It would be so appalling what we would be seeing. And yet, it's glorious.

It's the most glorious transaction that ever took place in this world, where Jesus was dying for us. And so there's glory, glory, glory, all throughout every step that he takes there. And so Jesus says, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

[14:20] And then he says, 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.

Jesus is taking a very natural, normal, everyday scene, as he was always doing, applying it spiritually. If you take a grain of wheat, and there you have that single grain of wheat, and you hold it, or you put it in a cupboard, or on a shelf, or you put it in your pocket, or you keep hold of it, that's what it's going to continue, as that grain of wheat.

It won't become two grains of wheat. It won't become anything else. It'll just stay there as that grain of wheat. That is all it'll ever be. But if you take that grain of wheat, and you sow it into the ground, it'll die.

And from that, there springs up. That's what we're told. It'll bear much fruit. And Jesus is showing us that this is exactly what is going to happen to himself.

And really he's saying, if he doesn't die, supposing Jesus had never come into this world to die, he would have, as it were, remained alone.

[15:41] Now, he didn't remain alone in the sense that he was always, always a fellowship with the Father and the Spirit. There was the Godhead were forever and ever enjoying the fullness of

fellowship and love and bond, the three in one.

However, as Jesus came into this world, in order for him not to be alone, in order for him to have a purchased church, to enjoy and to fellowship with, forever and ever, he had to die.

You know, you tonight talk about desire. And you talk of the desire to see Jesus.

Whatever desire you have in your heart, or whatever desire I have in my heart, it's nothing like the desire that was in the heart of Jesus. The desire that was in the heart of Jesus was an overwhelming desire.

And we find that in a high priestly prayer. You know, Jesus, at that time, was longing for the time. And he's still longing for the time. If we can, and I believe it.

[16:48] When all his people will be together with himself in glory. Tonight, there is, it's not a desire that's in any way producing something that is of want or need, because there is nothing imperfect in glory.

But remember, in glory, there are holy desires. The souls in glory are desired. There's a desire for the day when their body will be there, when there will be the fullness of the enjoyment, body and soul together.

And Jesus is desiring for the day. Father, I would, he says, that them also, those that you've given, would be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.

Jesus is longing for the day when all the church will be gathered together with him forever and ever and ever. So whatever desire you and I have in our hearts tonight, it's nothing like the desire that Jesus has for you.

So we've always got to remember that. We can get so caught up with ourselves and where we are that sometimes we lose sight of him and how it is from God's perspective.

[18:12] And so Jesus is seeing, and he's showing the people, and he's saying, right, if you really would, this is kind of what he's saying to these Greeks. The hour has come where the Son of Man is to be glorified.

Now, as we say, there was nothing to signify that at that particular moment that the hour of Christ's death had come. In fact, the reverse was through. This was a time when Jesus was receiving adulation from the crowds.

In fact, it would seem that it was a high point in Christ's ministry and life. They had been shouting, Hosanna. But Jesus knew that the cry of Hosanna was quickly going to change to crucify him.

Crucify him. Crucify him. But he knew because this was part of the divine appointment. And Jesus was saying to these Greeks, right, you want to see me.

Well, the real way to see me is in the same way as you take that grain of wheat and you sow it into the ground deliberately and see what becomes of it.

[19:25] And that, my friends, is how it is. Jesus in this world, remember, he was despised and rejected by men.

By and large, very few followed him. You know, Jesus said to his disciples that they were going to do greater works than he had done. And I'm sure they would, they couldn't understand that.

But you know, very shortly after Jesus had ascended to glory and the Pentecost came, Peter preached. Peter saw from his preaching what Jesus never saw humanly from his preaching. Thousands were converted. Thousands. This is what Jesus was talking about. And of course, this is where the power of the Holy Spirit came down.

So, Jesus is saying here, in order to see me, to see the glory, to see the church, to see what I'm about, I have to die. And it's through my death and all that happens, springing out from it will be the glory and the wonder of the church.

[20:43] So, Christ's death, as we see, is a hope for the world. It's a hope for the church. And then Jesus goes on to say, whoever loves his life loses it.

And whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Now, Jesus here, very simply, is saying that he's been talking about life and he's been talking about death.

And he's been talking about himself. But now he's turning it and he's pushing it and he's becoming more personal with regard to ourselves. And he's saying to us, if you, if you want to be somebody in life and you are only concerned about yourself and you're only concerned about this world, you know something he said?

You're going to lose your life. But the only way really to save your life is to give your life to me. And Jesus says, whoever loves his life loses it and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for

eternal life.

Now, it's a very strong word, that word hate. But it carries a comparative force. You've got to understand that. It carries a comparative force because Jesus doesn't mean, we mustn't lose sight of the strength of the word.

[22 : 13] Jesus elsewhere uses the same word about hating our father and our mother. And what Jesus here is saying is this, that we aren't to turn around all of a sudden and say, right, I'm a Christian.

I absolutely hate my life. And I'm going to do everything to my life that's going to make it just so painful and difficult and sore. And I'm going to hate my family and not for one moment is Jesus meaning that.

In fact, it should be the reverse. The Christian should look after his life. He has a duty to it because it has been given to him by God. His body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.

He should love his parents. He should love his brothers and sisters. He should love his husband and wife. And I'll never love before, love his brethren and so on. But it's a comparative force, remember.

What Jesus is saying is this, nobody or anything is to take the place above me. Husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter, even yourself.

[23 : 18] Jesus is saying, you must be prepared to lose your life for me. And many a person down through the history of the church has.

And even tonight, in this world, there are men and women and boys and girls who are losing their life because they love the Lord Jesus Christ. It costs them that much.

So, Jesus is spelling it out absolutely clearly. Discipleship costs. That's what he's showing. And we mustn't water down what the Lord Jesus is saying.

Because faith in Christ involves dying to the ways and to the applause and to the attractions of the world. To follow Jesus as Lord and King means denying ourself.

And we must die daily. And often these crosses and problems and trials and disappointments that you face in life, they're not random.

[24 : 27] They haven't come into your life and God doesn't know. Be quite persuaded of this, my Christian friend. God does not mess up our lives.

God meticulously is working in our lives. sometimes it's painful. Sometimes we face disappointments.

Sometimes we're left confused. And sometimes like the psalmists were saying, oh, that I had wings like a dove, that I could fly away and be at rest. And there's many a time we just say, oh, I wish it was different.

But God has a way. and he says, I know what's best for you. And my great aim for you is to make you more and more and more and like Jesus, my son.

That's what God is doing in you. And this is part of the dying to self daily. It's not easy because self is so powerful.

[25 : 31] It's so important to us. It's my way. You see, the disappointments in life that we face come about because life doesn't go the way that we want it.

And we say, we're always saying, well, I wanted it another way. But if we are truly following the Lord and dying to self, then we must be ready for the Lord to say, well, this is the way.

And seek for the grace to be molded and shaped in the Lord's way. So whoever loves his life loses it. And whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

My friend, that's the way. By losing our life in Jesus, we are actually keeping life. We are getting life forever and ever.

And then he says, if anyone serves me, he must follow me. follow me. And where I am, there will my servant be also. Follow me. You know, we use the expression here, I've said that before, and I love the expression about following.

[26 : 45] We talk about, I use the expression sometimes when a person, say a person starts going to the prayer meeting or something, or somebody becomes a believer.

We say, did you hear so and so has started following? When did he start following? When did she start following? We use that expression. And it's a very biblical expression.

It's a lovely expression. Following Jesus. And that's what people, it's such a biblical expression. When a person is converted, that's what they're doing.

They are beginning to follow Jesus. And when we follow Jesus, we find that we serve him. But we follow him. We follow him in obedience.

We follow his example. And this weekend, we're going to follow him to his table. Because he set this table for us. He's prepared it for us. He's prepared it for all those who have lost their life in him.

[27 : 51] And he wants you to come. Because remember, the table is a means of grace. And I want to reiterate that. the table is a means of grace.

It's there to strengthen your faith. And it will. You know, you will hear over and over and over and over again the testimony of those who struggled with going to the table, who were afraid.

and they were filled with fears and doubts and what ifs. Every single one of them will say afterwards, I'm so glad I went.

Why? Because their faith was strengthened. That's what it's there for. It's there, yes, it's there for us to remember Jesus.

and there's something happens. And so it should. When we take that bread and wine, we are remembering Jesus in a very special way, in a visible way.

[29 : 03] We are bringing Jesus before our consciousness and before our soul in a very powerful way. And the more we remember Jesus, the more in a sense he is, as it were, remembering us.

Of course, he's always remembering us. But there's a wonderful link because at the table, we are confessing Christ. You know, some people might be saying, I wish I was a better witness.

Do you know one of the great ways of witnessing is going to the table? Because when you're at the table, you're showing forth his death. That's what it says. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this wine, you do show forth, a public declaration, you do show forth the Lord's death till he come.

Everybody who's looking on watching you, taking that bread and taking that wine, is being told that Jesus died on the cross for you. And that Jesus is coming again to take you to be with himself.

It is in many ways the powerful witness, the powerful confession and testimony. And it's vital for the Lord's people to do that.

[30 : 27] And when we do that, him that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father who is in heaven. And there is a wonderful way then when the Holy Spirit will reassure you of God's love to you.

it seems to be this wonderful cycle. So Jesus is saying if anyone serves me the Father will honour him.

Isn't that wonderful? Well I hope you will all serve him by taking your place at the table. That's how one of the ways in which we serve.

And if we do we're told that the Father will honour him. let us pray. O Lord our God we pray that the word that we have heard may indeed be blessed to our soul.

We have to confess so often we are feeble. That's because we're human. And we're aware Lord of our mistakes, our failings, our faults.

[31 : 30] And we're so aware of our sin. But we give thanks that despite all that we are and all our fears and anxieties and all our wobbles that the Lord has a hold of us and he will never let us go.

We give thanks for that grace, that abundant grace that will keep the people of God to the very end who will take them down into death's dark veil and lead them up on the other side into the fullness of glory.

O Lord bless us we pray and we pray that we may all see Jesus, behold the King. We ask the Lord to bless us and take away from us our sin in Jesus' name.

Amen. Our concluding psalm is Psalm 26.