

**John 12: 20-26; “Christ the Grain of Wheat”, Sermon # 65 in the series –
“That All May Honor the Son”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on November 28th, 2021, in the Morning Worship Service.**

What did the Lord Jesus Christ come into the world to do? We find that Jesus tells us this in these verses. These words of Jesus have great significance for anyone who would know Christ or follow Christ, in our own day. His words here tell us what it would mean for Him to be glorified, and what it will mean for us to be glorified together with Him. And so, I would like to make 3 statements concerning what Jesus meant when He said that He, as a grain of wheat, would have to fall into the earth and die. When He said this, He was including all of His disciples in what it would mean for us to follow Him.

1st of all – For the Son of Man to be glorified He would have to suffer and die on our behalf.

So we see here that Jesus, after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, went up to worship at the feast of Passover with His 12 disciples. And we read here that there were certain Greeks there, who had come to worship also, and they came to Philip who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, ‘Sir, we wish to see Jesus.’ What kind of Greeks were these men? The most likely conjecture is, that they were Syro-Phoenician Gentile Greeks who had probably heard of Philip being one of Jesus’ disciples; Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee. Melancthon Jacobus says that this may account for Philip’s being spoken of here as from Bethsaida, in Galilee.” “His name has a Greek form, and it may imply that he had Greek relatives.” “If these Greeks had been from the neighborhood of Bethsaida, we may suppose that they would have been familiar with the Person of Jesus.”

Whatever the case was, these men thought that they might really be able to get to see Jesus, if they made request to Philip. They had heard of the great things that Jesus had been doing. They had heard of his miracles, and especially His raising Lazarus from the dead. And so they wanted to get to personally see Him now; the One who they highly esteemed. They no doubt wanted to hear things from Jesus’ own lips concerning the subject of eternal life. And so, hearing this request from them, Philip came and told Andrew about these men, and they both went and told Jesus.

Now, whether these men ever did get to see Jesus, we are not told. Verse 23 says – “But Jesus answered them”, as if to imply that He did not think that this was a good time for an interview when He was right on the verge of His sufferings and death. If they did get to see him, I think that they would have been very surprised to hear the words that Jesus spoke, which are recorded for here in verses 23-26. These men thought of Jesus as being a great Man and a Prophet, and even the promised Messiah of the Jewish people. But they did not understand that He had come to lay down His life for sinners. But in that day, many people, both Jew and Gentile, had a false conception of what Christ had come to do. They did not think that He would have to die for the sins of many.

It is probable that they thought that He would become a political King and deliver the Jewish people and themselves, from political tyranny. They hoped that that Jesus would set up an earthly political kingdom that would forever counteract that. But instead they find that Jesus is speaking of His becoming a grain of wheat falling into the earth and dying! Just the opposite of what people were expecting, and hoping for. But how did Jesus Himself look at his upcoming death? It appears from these verses that He thought of it in relation to what He would accomplish by laying down His life in sufferings on the cross.

He looked at it in a joyful expectant sense; of His being able to do and accomplish something tangible for particular people. He was saying that in becoming a grain of wheat that would fall into the earth and die, that He would not remain alone. His death would produce much grain, much fruit, as the word is literally in the original. And the fruit would be His seeing particular people saved. He is talking about the eternal salvation of many people. A single grain of wheat is

designed by God in this very way. I am told that a grain of wheat is almost the only seed, that being cast into the earth, does die. It was very right that Christ uses this example. (Gill) Just as a grain of wheat does not germinate unless it falls into the ground, and dies there, so that the outer covering rots off, and leaves the germ to spring up, even so, Christ could not save any single soul or set up His glorious kingdom, except that He die. If He did not die, He would remain alone. The disciples would see this with their own eyes, and own the truth of it, a few days later. In Christ's dying there was a producing of great fruit as a result. A single grain of wheat, falling into the ground and dying, produces a hundred fold more grain.

We must ask ourselves – What did Jesus mean that the hour had come that He, the Son of Man would be glorified? What He was saying was that the time had come for Him to suffer and to die for all the sinners in the world who would be saved by His suffering on their behalf. And then when He was raised from the dead in His glorious resurrection and ascension to glory, He would be exalted to an eternal throne. This is where He presently is, in heaven. He is sitting in what theologians call His Session. He is ruling in righteousness over all men. That is what it would mean for Him to be glorified. And so we should remember that it says in Hebrews chapter 12, verse 2, that it was for the joy that was set before Him that He endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Yet, in the next section of this passage in John, we will read of his soul being troubled by the prospect of His coming sufferings of soul and body. He will say – “And what shall I say?” “Father, save me from this hour?” “But for this very purpose I came to this hour.” “Father, glorify Your name.” No, the Lord Jesus was so strong in His righteous character as a Man that He could say in Luke 12, verse 50, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!” So, Jesus looked steadily forward to the time of His sufferings. And now that the hour had come, He knew that these Greeks who had come seeking Him were some of those whom He would die to save. This thought brought Him joy.

Let me ask you now whether you see that Christ must needs have died for you, or you could never have been saved. For in His death was your death to sin. He died to sin once for all. In His In His burial in the grave, is your burial of all your sins which He bore upon the tree. He did this in order that your sins will not be brought up before your face on the day of Judgment; neither will they be held against you will you live the rest of your life, when you believe in Jesus. Christ rose again as well, for in His resurrection is your spiritual life, leading to eternal and everlasting life. In His life is found the power for you to live a godly life, a holy life, a righteous life, and be with Him forever in glory. Christ is the Grain of Wheat which fell into the earth and died for you if you will believe in Him.

2nd – For you to be glorified together with Christ will mean that you will have to lose your life, and in one sense, hate it.

Verse 25 of our text – “He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” Now, it will be good to ask ourselves why Jesus put this statement in here at this point, if salvation is not by works? Beloved, He puts it in here in order to test your ultimate loyalty, whether it is to Himself or whether it is to yourself. Is your ultimate loyalty to your own understanding of what your life is, or will it be that you will learn of Him and follow Him? You are sure that you know that you want eternal life, and all the blessings that God can give in that regard. But He is asking – Will you give me everything? Will you give Me all of yourself so that I might make you over into My image and likeness? That is the question.

So Jesus is asking whether you are willing to lose your present worldly sinful life so that you might find that which is truly a godly life; a life of knowing Him and walking with Him. He is asking whether you will do your own will in the final analysis or His will when you have a choice in the matter. When Jesus asks you to lose your life, remember that He will give you His, and more of His as you go on to trust and obey Him. He asks you to give up the pursuit of the world and the things of the world. He asks you to give up and your own selfish sinful life apart from God and apart

from Christ. This worldly life gives you a false perception of how things really are in God's sight. The worldly life is like a thief who robs you of eternal and spiritual life. Jesus says concerning false prophets in John 10: 10 – "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

Now Jesus said those words concerning all the false teachers of self-righteousness in Israel who came before Him. They were the thieves and the robbers. And what we should conclude from this, is that a person who comes to Christ will lose their own self-righteousness life when they come to Him. There is a false spirituality in many unbelieving people. But when they come to Christ, they will no longer will trust in their own wisdom and strength in relation to keeping God's commandments. They will no longer believe the counsel of Mr. Worldly Wiseman, that your own evaluation of yourself in the sight of God; how well you are keeping God's commandments, will do. We all fall far short of the glory of God.

Even some Christians can fall into this mistaken thinking. Christ is saying here, that you must have His life in your life, and His teaching you in your mind, to truly know God and to walk with God. You must have Christ Himself teach you how to keep God's commandments out of love to Him, and love to other people. That is the right attitude. But sometimes, even when we love God, we do not know how to help other people come to a better obedience, or even how they might come to saving faith in Christ.

Sometimes this is due to a subtle attitude of superiority on our part. We think of the many things that have learned from the Bible. But we do not pray about how we might truly help others to understand those precious truths. We try to get people to be righteous by telling them what they should be doing, not realizing that they must have Christ show them the truth Himself. Sometimes in the way that we speak with others, we may actually convey the idea that being a Christian is a self-help program. But if you are wise, you know that it is not. So, then, since this is the case, then actually, the greatest thing that Christ would have you to do for Him is to show others, how much they need His grace and His strength to keep God's commandments.

I am saying, do not be a self-righteous Christian. Christ is the Perfect One. The more that you lose your life, the more that you will find His, by faith in Him. Indeed, Jesus is saying here, you need to come to hate your own life in this world, in order to keep it for eternal life. In what sense should we understand this? Yes, before you are saved, you will hate what sin has done to your life. But Jesus is saying here that as a Christian, you should hate it too! That when you see the fleshly, selfish, unloving thoughts that still exist in your heart at times, that you will hate yourself for tolerating them. Thoughts of self-righteous pride when you are trusting in your own evaluation of yourself, how good a person you supposedly are, according to your own righteousness.

When you think this way, then you will find yourself often looking down upon others and despising them for their sinfulness in comparison to you. That is not glorifying to God. It simply shows how much you have to learn. Think about Jesus with the Rich Young Ruler. In Mark 19: 17 it says that he came running to Jesus and He asked Him – "Good Teacher!" "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" And Jesus, right off the bat, said to him – "Why do you call Me good?" "No one is good but One, that is God." Now, when Jesus said this, He did not at all intend to deny that He was God in one of His natures. He said that, in order that the Rich Young Ruler, who thought that he had kept all of God's commandments, would begin to understand how much he had to learn to really please God.

He thought that he had kept all of God's commandments from his youth, when actually, he loved money and earthly riches more than God. He was a sinner and didn't know it. There was this great besetting sin of covetousness in him. It was that sin which caused him to walk away from Christ sad. He could not give his life to Christ. He could not lose his present life of thinking that money was the answer to everything. He thought the riches of the world, of greater value than the riches of Christ. The riches of Christ's grace, His teaching, His love, His fellowship and communion, were of less importance than his holding on to his money. What a terrible mistake he

made! He forfeited eternal life! Jesus had said to him that if he wanted to be perfect (Matthew 19: 21) he should go, sell, what he had and give to the poor; and he would have treasure in heaven; and come and follow Him.

What a great offer this was, to walk with Jesus! But he wanted His money more than walking with Christ who would become His all in all to him. Christ could have been his life, his salvation, and His riches; and following Him could have been his greatest joy and happiness. We must always ask ourselves whether there is something which is more important to us than knowing Christ, and following Him, learning how to do God's will from a cheerful heart, to God's glory. Sometimes it is the importance of certain people in your life that keeps you from loving God and following Christ in giving Him your greatest loyalty. You love that person and you want their approval more than anything else. You love for your family or your closest relatives is greater than your love for Christ.

In Luke 14: 25 Jesus addresses this. He said – “Now great multitudes went with Him.” “And He turned and said to them, ‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.’” Now what does Jesus mean by this? He doesn't mean that we should hate our relatives with malice, thinking meanly toward them, never spending time with them; speaking against them to other people, or doing mean things to them. What He meant was that being a Christian is not simply a popular movement where you will never be opposed by father or mother or wife or children, by brothers, and sisters and mother, when you are trying to follow Christ and keep God's commandments.

You should expect this opposition and prepare yourself to receive it in godly Christian way. You love Christ and obedience to God's word, more than your relatives approval and their trying to get you to live in a worldly or sinful way. In Matthew 10: 34-39, Jesus puts it in another similar way. “Do not think that I came to bring peace but a sword.” “For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be those of his own household.” “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of me.” “And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” “And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.” “He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”

This is the same truth being taught from the opposite direction; that of love. Your parent or your child says that you do not love them if you will not agree with them in regard to some worldly thinking, or some earthly pleasure, or pursuit. You say that you love them, but you love Christ more. And you love them enough to tell them that you will not follow them into anything sinful, worldly, or wrong, because You love Christ more, and you want the best for them. This is especially true when it comes to the matter of staying in a church where the truth of the Bible is not honored or taught, and the way of salvation is not clearly preached. If you love Christ and His word more, you will come out of such a church.

Let us realize that the people whom we love will never come to see the truth of the Bible as being true unless we take a stand and tell them that we love Christ and the truth of the Bible more than any family member or earthly friend. The reason that we say this is not because we do not love them. We most certainly do. But the relationship with Christ means picking up your cross and following Him. You are picking up your cross when you declare that following Christ your Lord is more important to you than the approval of any relative who is trying to make you compromise the truth of the Bible, or shift your loyalty from Christ to someone else or something else beside Him. This is what it means to hold fast to Him and to the truth; to hate your life when you see anything that you are thinking, saying, or doing, that dishonors Christ, whom you know that you love above all people and all things. If you love Him, you will repent and do the first works; the works that you did out of your first love for Christ.

3rd – For you to be glorified together with Christ will mean that someday you will be where He is.

Verse 26 – If anyone serves Me let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also.” “If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.” The emphasis here is on our going to be where Christ is, because we have served Him. To follow Christ is to serve Him, and to serve Him is to keep His commandments out of love to Him. It is good to remember that serving Christ in specific ways flows out of your love to Him, your love to the brethren, and your loving the lost, so as to win them to Christ. Do we do this perfectly? No, we do not, but our intent is to serve Him in better and better ways, as we live our life for Him.

What should our attitude be then, towards ourselves, in our service to Christ? It should be that we think about Him personally, as to whether He is pleased with us in the way that we serve Him. Are we really serving Him, or are we pleasing ourselves? Luke 17: 7-10 – “And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat?’” “But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink?’” “Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him?” “I think not.” “So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants’” “We have done what was our duty to do.”

Ah, that is the right attitude, is it not? It is the attitude of humility that says – I want to bring satisfaction to my Master Christ. I am not looking for Him to feed me first, and then Himself afterwards. I will see that He eats first; that He is satisfied first. I will do my service to Him with His honor and glory in mind. I will do it to Him, and for Him. And afterward, I will trust that He will feed me what He thinks is right. He will satisfy me and reward me in the right way. But after all is said and done, your attitude, after you have done all that He has commanded you, will be – “I am still an unprofitable servant. I have only done what was my duty to do. Let me ask in closing – Is service to your King reward enough for you?

If you are faithful to Christ as you learn to follow Him, in doing what pleases Him, then when you die you will go to where He is. And you will see your Master face to face. Your reward will be in hearing the, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” “Enter in to the joy of your Lord.” Where He is, so you shall be, forever. Each of us as believers, in our physical death, and future resurrection from the dead, can look forward to our death, because Christ is on the other side, bringing us there. 1st Corinthians 15: 35 – “But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up?’” “And with what body do they come?” “Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies.” “and what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain – perhaps wheat or some other grain.” “But God give it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.”

Verse 42 – So also is the resurrection of the dead.” “The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.” “It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory.” “It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.” “It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.” “There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” And so, it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being.” “The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.” Verse 49 – “And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.” And what a Day that shall be; the day of the resurrection of all of the dead, where we shall behold the great harvest of Billions of people whom Christ purchased by becoming the grain of wheat which fell into the earth and died.