

John 12:20-36  
The Approaching Hour

<sup>20</sup> Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks.<sup>21</sup> So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” <sup>22</sup> Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. <sup>23</sup> And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> 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. <sup>25</sup> Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> 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.

### **The Son of Man Must Be Lifted Up**

<sup>27</sup> “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose, I have come to this hour.<sup>28</sup> Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” <sup>29</sup> The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” <sup>30</sup> Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine.<sup>31</sup> Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.<sup>32</sup> And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” <sup>33</sup> He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. <sup>34</sup> So the crowd answered him, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” <sup>35</sup> So Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. <sup>36</sup> While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.”

The theme of our preaching during this month of March is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. We will look at several key passages in John’s Gospel that focus on the events leading up to and including the cross.

The cross was a dreadful instrument of death, even spoken of in the OT:

<sup>22</sup> “And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, <sup>23</sup> his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance. Deut. 21:22-23

The Roman government during the days of Jesus’ ministry used crosses as instruments of execution for the worst criminals – normally a Roman citizen would not be executed on a cross.

But for the Christian, the cross remains a sacred symbol – because it was on the cross that Jesus bore our sins and died the death that we deserved. Throughout Christian history the

cross has adorned church buildings and been worn around one's neck – stressing the sacred value the cross has in the Christian faith. Had Christ not died on Calvary's cross, our sins would not have been forgiven – we would have remained in our sins to face the judgment of God.

As we take up our passage today from John 12:20-36 we see that Jesus is fast approaching the whole purpose for which he came from heaven. He came to live among us, yet ultimately to die for his people. The cross was the culmination of his saving work to pay the price necessary to redeem sinners.

Ever since the day he was born of the virgin Mary, the direction, the trajectory of his life was toward the cross. In John's gospel Jesus used a special word to describe his coming experience on the cross. He called it "the hour." This term was not meant to describe a literal 60 minutes of time but an experience, a happening, a redemptive event that would take place when Jesus was nailed to the cross and our sins were placed on him and God's wrath against our sins was poured out on him.

How long was Jesus on the cross? It seems like he was hung up between 9:00am and 12:00 noon and expired at 3:00pm – so he was there for several hours.

Jesus knew from the beginning of his ministry that the cross was his destination – he called it "the hour. Or my hour or his hour." Listen to these texts from John's gospel and we can see that the approaching hour of his death was theme through his ministry:

2:4 - "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My **hour** has not yet come."

7:30 - So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his **hour** had not yet come.

8:20- These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his **hour** had not yet come.

12:23 - And Jesus answered them, "The **hour** has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

12:27 - "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this **hour**'? But for this purpose I have come to this **hour**."

13:1 - Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his **hour** had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

17:1 - When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the **hour** has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,

Jesus was talking about the hour of his suffering on the cross. Throughout his ministry this approaching hour was on his mind. Yet he never shrunk from doing his Father's will. He said on more than one occasion: For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own **will** but **the will of him who sent me**. John 6:38

Jesus knew he had come from heaven to experience the hour of the cross.

Suppose Jesus had not gone to the cross. You and I would still be in our sins; the wrath of God would still be on our heads. Rev. 14:7 – .. “Fear God and give him glory, because the **hour** of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.” Here the Book of the Revelation talks about another “hour” that awaits the future: the Hour of Judgment.

The only way to escape the hour of God's coming judgment is to take to ourselves the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made when he fulfilled the Father's will by going to the cross.

Jesus knew his hour on the cross was coming. He spoke about it several times in the gospels. For example, Matt. 16:21 after Peter had confessed that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the Living God,” we read: - <sup>21</sup> (a)From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that (b)he must go to Jerusalem and (c)suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on (d)the third day be raised.

How did Jesus know what awaited him? He knew it because he knew the OT prophecies about the suffering and death of Yahweh's Messiah. We read, for example in Isaiah 53:  
**12: he poured out his soul to death**  
**and was numbered with the transgressors;**  
**yet he bore the sin of many,**  
**and makes intercession for the transgressors.**

Recently the Russian dissident, Alexei Navalny, was killed in a Russian prison camp. He knew that if he went back to Russia he would probably be arrested and imprisoned. But this did not deter him. He didn't think he could do any good for his nation being a dissident in exile. He was willing to pay the price of his own life for his nation, his people.

So Jesus Christ our Lord was not deterred from the suffering and death that awaited him on the cross. His suffering was greater than any human could imagine – he was the innocent and sinless one upon whom were heaped the wicked sins of all his people throughout human history.

No wonder he said in John 12:27: “Now **is my soul troubled**. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.”

As the hour of the cross approached Jesus's soul was troubled. It was extremely troubled. We cannot imagine how troubled it was. He was coming under the wrath of God for sins he never committed. He was going to be separated from his Father whom he'd never been separated from before. Like an infant who had only known mother's closeness and breast is suddenly yanked away and set off to another place far from his mother, so Jesus was going to be yanked about from his Father's presence and fellowship.

As the hour of his crucifixion approached Jesus went into agonizing prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prayed that if were at all possible that the Father would remove from him the bitter cup of the cross. Yet ultimately he submitted to the Father's will. He fulfilled the approaching hour that was ordained for him.

But Jesus did not go whining to the cross, reluctantly and begrudgingly. Heb. 12:2 makes this amazing statement: looking to Jesus, **the** founder and perfecter **of** our faith, who for **the** joy that was set before him endured **the cross**, despising **the shame**, and is seated at **the right hand of the throne of God**.

12:27 - "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this **hour**'? But for this purpose I have come to this **hour**."

Jesus said that the whole purpose of his life and ministry, his incarnation, his living among men and women, was for the purpose of fulfilling the hour of the cross.

Let's ask this question: what **purposes** were accomplished from his going to the cross? I want to mention several:

1. **The Purpose of Reconciliation** between a rebellious humanity and a just God. This is an impossible situation. Humans who are selfish and insensitive and uncaring toward God and a just and holy God who requires perfection and sinlessness of humans in order to enter his presence and fellowship. How do you bring such contradicting parties together?

Humanly speaking, there is no solution. Man does not have the power, the inclination, the desire, the ability to submit to God and come under his Lordship.

For anything to happen, God, the stronger and wiser one, must do something to bring lost humanity to himself.

It was the cross of Jesus Christ that accomplished this. On the cross the sins of God's people were judged and done away with; at the same time the righteousness of Jesus Christ was applied to his people's accounts.

The reconciliation between an offended God and a sinful people was effected through the cross of Jesus Christ. We read in Col. 1:19-20 - ***19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.***

*How were the estranged people of God reconciled to God, that is brought into a living relationship with him? The text says here, "by the blood of the cross." We should never downplay the cruciality of Jesus shed blood on the cross. Some may charge Christianity with Being a blood religion.*

*The religion that God revealed to humanity has always been a bloody religion. In the very Garden of Eden, after Adam and Eve first sinned, God himself killed an animal and covered the first man and woman in animal skins. Then later when God gave Moses the entire sacrificial*

system it was built upon the regular offering up of the blood of innocent animals for the sins of humanity.

Yet all this animal blood was only a temporary covering for sins. It could not really remove sin. It was only the spilt blood of the Son of God that had the power to remove human sin. Heb.

**9:26 - But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.**

**Jesus said in v. 27:** But for this purpose, I have come to this hour:

**2. The purpose of Propitiation:**

Rom. 3:25 - <sup>25</sup>whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

**Ligon Duncan:**

He is the propitiation (*hilasmos*) for our sins. Again, “to propitiate” means “to satisfy the wrath of God against sin,” “to turn away God’s wrath,” or “to offer a sacrifice that appeases God’s just judgment and righteous anger against us and our sin.” And note, Jesus is not simply “the propitiator” but the “propitiation.” He is what satisfies the justice of God. The term points to Jesus as covenantal sacrifice and to what the effect of his death was, what it effectively—not just potentially—accomplished.

**Jesus said in v. 27:** But for this purpose, I have come to this hour:

**3. The purpose of Substitution:**

2 Cor. 5:21 - <sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

**The great exchange: Jesus took our sin and gave us his righteousness. For forgive and erase sin is not enough - we need the positive righteousness of Christ to be accepted into God’s presence and fellowship.**

**Jesus said in v. 27:** But for this purpose, I have come to this hour:

**4. The purpose of Eternal redemption:** Heb. 9:12 - <sup>12</sup>he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

**Jesus said in v. 27:** But for this purpose, I have come to this hour:

**5. The purpose of Walking in newness of life:**

Rom. 6:4 - <sup>4</sup> We were <sup>(A)</sup>buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as <sup>(B)</sup>Christ was raised from the dead by <sup>(C)</sup>the glory of the Father, we too might walk in <sup>(D)</sup>newness of life.

**Jesus said in v. 27:** But for this purpose, I have come to this hour:

**6. The purpose of living by faith in the Son of God everyday:**

Gal. 2:20 <sup>20</sup> I have been <sup>(A)</sup>crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives <sup>(B)</sup>in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, <sup>(C)</sup>who loved me and <sup>(D)</sup>gave himself for me.

**Jesus said in v. 27:** But for this purpose, I have come to this hour:

**7. That we might no longer live for ourselves for him, for his glory, for his honor.**

2 Cor. 5:14-15 - <sup>14</sup> For the love of Christ <sup>(A)</sup>controls us, because we have concluded this: that <sup>(B)</sup>one has died for all, therefore all have died; <sup>15</sup> and he died for all, <sup>(C)</sup>that those who live might no longer live for themselves but <sup>(D)</sup>for him who for their sake died and was raised.

Christ's purpose in going to the cross was to create new people – a people who are renewed inwardly. People in whom the HS dwells. His purpose was to create a people whose purpose in life is greater than their own private agenda. A people who are consumed with a passionate love and commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives.

This is a new human race – a new humanity that astounds the heavenly beings:

Eph 3:10, <sup>10</sup> so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

When Jesus died on Calvary's cross it was not just another case of the Roman empire executing another bothersome criminal, but as someone (JB Torrence in NBD )has said, The NT writers ...are concerned with the eternal, cosmic, soteriological significance of what happened once for all in the death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, on the cross. ...the word "cross" was used as a summary description of the gospel of salvation, that Jesus "died for our sins' . So the "Preaching of the cross" is the "word of the cross" , the preaching of Christ crucified (1 Cor. 1;17ff)

**Jesus said in v. 27:** But for this purpose, I have come to this hour:

Oh, blessed hour of salvation for the people of God.

Oh, blessed hour that purchased God's people from the slave market of sin.

Oh, blessed hour that provided for the people of God not only the removal of Guilt but the impartation of Christ's righteousness.

On blessed hour, that led to Christ's resurrection and ascension and high priestly ministry at the Father's right hand.

Oh blessed hour from which Christ did not shrink from but he drank its full, bitter cup.

But for this purpose, I have come to this hour," said Jesus. Thank God, he fulfilled his purpose and so purchased us as his beloved children.

Let us live in humble and joyful gratitude all the days of our lives. *Great things he has done for us, for which we are glad.* Amen.

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