

**Introduction:** (Read John 12:12-32) The scene is the Sunday before Passover. Jerusalem is crowded with pilgrims coming to the feast and more are coming with each day. It hasn't been long since Jesus raised Lazarus to life – and this after being dead for four days. There are among those in the crowd many who were there to witness the miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus – the final “signs” recorded by John by which John presented Jesus to his readers as the Christ, the son of God. He hoped to convince his readers that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Son of God so that they would believe in Him and have life in Him (20:30-31).

There are many things we could say about this day, all of which are important. However, John seems to focus on two major themes – the first is the cross of Jesus. In this passage John, in the words of Jesus, presents the cross as the crystalizing event or truth in understanding/identifying true Christianity, genuine worship and true discipleship. So the second clear point of emphasis is the contrast which exists in the response of the people to Jesus – many of those who gathered to see Him and who cried “Hosanna” offered only superficial worship. They would, only a short time later shout “Crucify Him!”

*\*The Cross Of Jesus* –By this time the Cross of Jesus is casting a growing shadow over the His days. With the resolve of Jesus to go to the cross becoming increasingly clear, the resolve of the authorities to crucify Him increases (11:47-53; 12:9-10, 19).

John closes his narration of the crowd celebrating Jesus as the coming Messianic King with three statements – His disciples confusion over the events (12:16), his note that many were there because they had either witnessed or been told of Jesus raising Lazarus (12:17-18), and a note that the Pharisees said “the whole world has after Him.” It is then that John sets the stage for Jesus explanation of His impending death being the moment of great glory.

*\*\*The cross is His place of glory* – Ironically John now records the request of a group of Greeks “to see Jesus” (12:20-22) which seems to fulfill the unintended prophecy of the Jewish leaders (12:19; cf. also 12:32). ***Jesus response emphasizes the glory of the cross!!***

**First** - to “see” Jesus rightly is to see Him “lifted up” on the cross (**12:23, 27-28**). It is the hour of His glory and the glory of the Father through Him, because the cross is the beginning of the events which lead ultimately to His final and full exaltation to glory (cf. 17:1-5).

**Second** – the cross is the “supreme manifestation” of His glory because ***it is there*** that the battle will be fought and the victory won over sin, the enemy and the curse (cf. 12:31). ***It is there*** that perfect love is on display as the incarnate God submits to being made sin, to the malice of the enemy and rebellious men and women, to suffering and finally to death, in order to conquer it all on our behalf and to return it all in submission to God (cf. John 3:16; also 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; Ephesians 1:17-23; Philippians 2:5-11).

**Note: On this day Jesus was being lauded as the Messianic King** – yet we see the One who would be our Great High Priest arriving to offer Himself to the Father as our perfect sacrifice for sin (cf. Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:16-5:10; 9:11-14; 10:11-14).

To “see” Jesus is to see Him in His glory in the Garden of Gethsemane - the garden of His agony – the place of His greatest struggle and most glorious triumph – those horrific hours are filled with a glory I have come to love (Luke 11:39-46; Mark 14:32-36; Matthew 26:36-43).

To “see” Jesus is to see Him in His glory on the cross – the glory of both His most profound humiliation/ignobility and of the glory of His greatest accomplishment (cf. Philippians 2:5-11).

To “see” Jesus is to see Him in His glory is to hear His words spoken from the cross. The Jews mocked Him and told Him to come down and He stayed on the cross prayed for their forgiveness and ours I have come to love the words of Jesus spoken from the cross, words filled with the agony of being made sin for us and the love driven grace in the work He finished there that day (cf. “My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?!” AND “It is finished!” And “Into thy hands I commend my spirit.”)

The responses to Him that day is also a point of emphasis in John’s telling of this event.

*\*The Response To Jesus Of Those Who Were There That Day* – 12:12-17, 37 – **Note:** Every single person in this audience need look to carefully to find themselves among those on the outskirts of Jerusalem that day.

*\*\*Those who celebrated or worshipped Jesus as He entered Jerusalem* – **Note:** We are told that many came to see the one who had raised Lazarus from the dead. They believed – rightly – that He was - He must be the promised Messianic King. Why is that wrong or is it wrong? It is not “wrong” but it is clearly superficial. **For them – Jesus was means to an end and not the end itself!! That appears in at least three ways.**

- They came to see and worship – and be willing to follow Jesus as the King of an earthly kingdom. They came to install an earthly political leader of an earthly political kingdom – J. Forsythe – Many of us, in the evangelical church in America, have a political faith. We have come to see – practically and subtly – that the USA has replaced Israel as God’s chosen and therefore this nation cannot fail. We attempt to establish His Kingdom by political leaders and by law. As we will see – the way of the cross will challenge that superficial faith.

- They came to see and worship – and be willing to follow - Jesus as a worker of miracles. He was the One who was beyond their earthly and temporal existence. He was the One who declared that they were not alone – there really was a God who gave them a sense of meaning and purpose to life etc. He would affirm them – they really did matter... But there was no ugly sin, judgement, crucifixion as a part of that – He told us that we are innately good.

- They came to see and worship – and be willing to follow - Jesus as our powerful and generous benefactor. He came to meet their temporal needs – health – prosperity – safety – homes – jobs – He is my great miracle worker – the one who would make my dreams come true!

This is not unlike what happened in 6 after Jesus had miraculously fed the five thousand many came out to see Him and He knew their hearts and admonished them (cf. 6:25-27). ***They sought Him as a miracle worker – for what He could do for them, here and now – they sought a “cross-less” Jesus.***

- Contrast this with the worship of Mary. She worshipped Jesus as supremely valuable (cf. 12:1-3, 7-10; cf. Philippians 4:7-14). He was not a means to an end – rather the end of her pursuit and the great object her passionate worship – the cross could not dissuade her worship but only deepen it. **Note:** The genuine worshipper who “sees” Jesus as supremely valuable can truly and gladly follow Him – even embracing the way of the cross as the path of the disciple – death unto life!!

*\*\*Jesus declared that the cross defines the way of the true disciple – (cf. 12:20-32)*

- The cross was the place of glory for the Lord and is embraced as such by those who truly follow Him (cf. 12:23-26; Phillipans 1:20-21, 29; Colossians 1:24-228; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18; Acts 20:22-24). For Judas and those with only a superficial faith – it is the place of stumbling or shame (cf. 12:4-7, 37).

- It is in that context that He gives the illustration of the “grain of wheat.” The immediate application is to Jesus’ death and its outcome of life. However, Jesus quickly turns to application to those who follow Him. We must follow Him in His cross.

- The purpose of the grain is to bear fruit and multiply itself – This metaphor puts His death in the context of both necessity and purpose or design. For Jesus to reject this death would be for Him to reject God’s natural purpose for His incarnation, and coming and consequently His glory and that of the Father. He was here for eternal purpose, to accomplish God’s eternal plan. How contrary, even odious, would it have been if He had cherished this incarnate life more than the glory of God (cf. 13:1; 17:5, 24).

**Note:** We are admonished by these words. As those who follow Jesus (12:25-26) we must walk in the steps which led Him to the cross – the path of His cross is our path. We, like the grain of wheat, have a Divine purpose which calls for our death (cf. Matt. 16:21). This may apply to martyrdom but more often to seeing our life in the light of God’s Kingdom purposes – our life is not our own, we were bought with a price (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Romans 12:1-2). This is feet on the ground living – the way of the cross is the way of life for the believer. We cannot bear the fruit of God in our contexts if we see our lives and cling to our lives in temporal terms (1 John 2:15-17) – as dads, husbands, moms, wives, children, ball-players, lawyers, accountants,

foresters, computer guys/girls, laborers, etc. possessors of goods and things, people in positions of influence and power (cf. 11:47-48; 12:42-43).

- Death is necessary for the generation of life – the product of life is the outcome of His death. It is here that His life accomplishes its Divine purpose. We just saw this in Lazarus. His raising of Lazarus was contingent upon His own death. This is parallel to what He said in Matthew 16:21. Hence, though the cross is a place of shame and humiliation, it is ultimately the place of eternal glory. **He was embracing His cross (12:27-28) and so too we must embrace His cross as our cross!!**

- His death was entered into with the anticipation of joy/glory (Hebrews 12:1-2; 17:1-5). This is our joy/glory (12:26; cf. 14:21-24; 17:24-26). This cross is certainly a place of temporal sacrifice and loss but it is the place of true and eternal joy and glory!! ***Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. (1John 2:6 NIV)***