



**“Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” John 12:24**

## Jesus Speaks about the Coming of His Hour

**JOHN 12:20–36** <sup>20</sup>Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. <sup>21</sup>They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” <sup>22</sup>Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. <sup>23</sup>Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup>Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup>Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup>Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

<sup>27</sup>“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that 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 standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” <sup>30</sup>Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. <sup>31</sup>Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven 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 indicate the kind of death he was to die. <sup>34</sup>The crowd answered him, “We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” <sup>35</sup>Jesus said to them, “The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. <sup>36</sup>While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light.”*

*After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them.*

**I**mmediately after the Jewish crowds in Jerusalem jubilantly welcomed Jesus into the city, some Greeks also come wanting to see Jesus (verses 20–21). Greeks were known as a people who seek wisdom and truth, so they had come to Jerusalem for the festival. But these Greeks also represent the broader world of the Greek-speaking Gentiles. So here, at the time when Jesus enters the climactic period of his mission, both Jews and Gentiles are coming to him. As the authorities feared, “the whole world has gone after him!” In the context of this emphasis on the universal outreach of his mission, Jesus announces that the time has arrived to begin the culmination of his work on earth: “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (verse 23).

Jesus begins to teach about the significance of this hour of his glorification. He describes it as the germinating process of a grain of wheat (verse 24). Like the grain that must first die in the earth before it can bear fruit, Jesus must undergo his passion and in the process be lifted up and experienced as the glorious savior of all people. This movement from death to life applies also to discipleship. Those who wish to share in his life forever must embrace this same understanding of self-giving, not holding their lives in this world too tightly, but being willing to suffer and lay down their lives, following Jesus wherever he goes (verses 25–26).

John’s gospel does not record Jesus’ agony in the garden of Gethsemane. The closest equivalent is this prayer of his troubled soul (verse 27). Jesus is momentarily tempted to ask the Father to save him from the hour of his passion, but he responds quickly, “No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” This is the equivalent of “Thy will be done” in the other gospels. Here the divinity of Jesus is so prominent that all refer-

ences to his human agony are removed. The Father is doubly glorified (verse 28): he has been glorified through the loving obedience of the Son, and the Father will be glorified again when Jesus is reunited to his Father through his death and resurrection.

John's gospel does not record any of the accounts (that are so abundant in the other gospels) of Jesus curing those possessed by demons. Instead, this hour of Jesus is described as one great exorcism in which "the ruler of this world will be driven out" (verse 31). Through his passion and glorification, the great Adversary is defeated and his captives are set free. The cross is the power that defeats this world's powers of sin and death and draws all people to Jesus. Seen in this light, a dark tragedy becomes a glorious victory.

The lifting up of Jesus on the cross is both his crucifixion and his exaltation: "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself" (verse 32). In his death on the cross is the power of his resurrection. At the cross, Jesus draws people to himself like a magnet. When he is lifted up from the earth, Jesus becomes the universal king, attracting Jews and Greeks and all kinds of people to himself with the gift of salvation and eternal life.

In response to people's speculations and questions about the Messiah, Jesus urges them to action by returning again to the metaphor of the light (verses 35–36). He tells them to walk while they have the light, like a traveler at sundown, before the darkness falls: "While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light." Of course, Jesus himself is the light. Those who believe in him also walk with him and do not stumble in the darkness.

## Reflection and discussion

- Why would Jesus announce that the hour for his glorification had arrived when some Greeks wished to see him?

- What are some of the many layers of meaning in Jesus' climactic statement: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself"?

- In what sense does the gospel describe the hour of Jesus' cross as a world-wide exorcism?

- In what areas of my life do I still walk in darkness? What does the call of Jesus to walk in the light, in the way of faith and discipleship, mean concretely in my own life?

## Prayer

*Light of the world, your luminous cross brightens the darkness of the world and draws all people to you. Transform my life as I embrace your cross, believe in you, and walk in your light.*