

The Hour Has Come
John 12:20-33
March 17, 2023

Jesus came from the Father with a mission to bring abundant and eternal life to his sisters and brothers who he loves. For this to happen he knew that he would have to be the holy and acceptable sacrifice required by God as payment for “the penalty for our sins in his death for us on the cross.” (1) Jesus told his disciples several months before his death that he must suffer many things, be rejected by the Jewish authorities, die, and after three days rise again. (Mark 8:31) They had difficulty believing what he was telling them because it was inconceivable that the Messiah should come to such a tragic end.

The events in our text happen less than four days before Jesus’ crucifixion and death. The time for Jesus’ earthly life and ministry was running out. Jesus knew this. When some Greeks who came to the Passover ask to meet him, he realizes that his hour has come. Four times in John’s gospel it is mentioned that Jesus’ time had not yet come. Twice he says so himself “My hour has not yet come...” and “My time has not yet come...” (John 2:4,7:6) And twice John writes that those who wanted to do so did not lay hands on him because his hour/time had not yet come. (John 7:30, 8:20) But now the moment has arrived. Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” (John 12:23) What made the difference? The Greeks sought out the Lord. Jesus realized that his message was going out – reaching beyond the Jewish community to the Gentiles and his light was beginning to shine for all humanity.

God wants all people to come to him. He is our father and we are his children even if we are not willing to acknowledge it. The Jews saw themselves as God’s chosen people, and their nation and its culture served as a haven of blessing for Jesus until his death, all of which was supposed to happen. Jesus came to die on a cross. Knowing the time for his glorification is near Jesus said, “... unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” (John 12:24) In late April and early May the grass often looks so green and beautiful, as it has gotten off to a wonderful start. Then come the dreaded dandelions. Speaking from experience, it is hard to keep up with them especially if you are trying to dig them up. Sometimes it seems they appear, grow to maturity, and die in a day. Their little seeds then fly all over and next year you have a bigger problem so you try to destroy them before they get to that point. As much as I don’t like dandelions they can serve as an illustration. Reverend W. Leon Morrow shares his thoughts with us: “Imagine a great dandelion blown all over the world to every human. Then stretch your imagination a bit

more and imagine the Holy Spirit blows a seed of love from Calvary to every person, not just to those living on the day of resurrection, but across time and space to every person. The human Jesus could not be in every place at the same time, but upon death, Jesus was able to send the Holy Ghost, the Comforter to every person at all times in history.” (2)

“Jesus was born to die for you. You were born to live for Jesus.” (3) Life without Jesus is like whipped topping: it looks delicious but when you take a bite, there is no substance; it’s fluff. We all want to live a life with substance—something with meaning, richness, character, and which makes a difference not only in this world but eternally. To live our life by always putting ourselves first is to lose what’s really important. You were born to serve Jesus. To quote from a recent sermon, “If you try to hold on to that which you have, you will miss what Jesus wants to give you.” (4) Jesus wants to fill your life with peace, power, and purpose. He wants us to stop merely enduring life but to find joy in the ride of life. Jesus said in John 10:10 “I’ve come that you might have life and have it to the fullest.” Grab hold of Jesus, walk with him, work with him, live through him, and rejoice in the wonderful life he has for you. Don’t settle for fluff. When you live for Jesus, he and his Father come and live in your heart. They take up residence. Your life has a new purpose. You no longer live to do just what you want, but you become a follower and servant of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. And what does Jesus say in our text for this morning: “My Father will honor the one who serves me.” (John 12:26) Let God honor you.

Jesus goes on to say, “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour? No, it was this very reason that I came to this hour.” (John 12:27) Jesus at this moment is experiencing agony, similar to what he experienced three days later in the Garden of Gethsemane as recorded in the other gospels. He considers for a moment asking his Father to save him from the prospect of dying on the cross as a sin-offering for mankind. Who can blame him? After all, he has to bear both the agony of the cross and the weight of the sin of all humanity for all time. Who would wish to die in their thirties on a cross? Many non-believers see Jesus as a wimp. But he was strong, bold, and courageous for although he was heavily burdened with what lie ahead—the cross and the weight of humanity’s sin—he did what needed to be done. God in his mercy and grace provided a substitute for us who was holy and sinless. Paul wrote when trying to explain to his readers who Jesus was: “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21) As sinners, we deserve death, but Christ took our punishment and sin upon himself that we as believers might receive his righteousness and be reconciled with God.

“The town of Ocean Breeze on Staten Island is being terrorized by marauding flocks of wild turkeys. The problem all started about a decade ago when a local resident “released” her ten pet turkeys into the neighborhood. They now number more than a hundred. Routinely tying up traffic as they stroll in the streets, the turkeys leave a trail of excrement in their wake, and often intimidate the locals with their aggressive behavior. Seniors are afraid to wander into their yards and even the young have found themselves fearful, with one woman having recently been trapped in her car by the forceful fowl. "It was straight out of 'Cujo,'" said dental assistant Gina Guaragno, 23. "I'm sitting in my car Facebooking on my phone when turkeys jumped on my windshield. I screamed like I was being murdered. They just kept looking at me like it was their car. I felt trapped. I was so scared." For now, a garden hose remains one's best defense against the imposing birds, since city law protects wild turkeys from “hunting” or “harvesting.” City Councilman James Oddo asks, "How are people supposed to have faith that their government can deal with problems like terrorism when we can't even deal with turkeys?" (5) I don't know the answer to his question but I do know that although it may seem like we are surrounded by Satan's turkeys at times, God is ultimately in control.

Two thousand years ago Jesus came and sealed Satan's fate. As much as it may seem at times that Satan is in control, we as believers fight the good fight against Satan and his evil ways from a position of victory. Satan has power in our lives only when we give it to him. One of my brother Lenard's favorite sayings is that we are our own worst enemies. And since that is true, we too often let Satan get a grip on our lives but we need to remember as the sign on a lawn a half mile away west of here says, “God's got this.” The victory has been won. Christ defeated Satan at Calvary. We can lean on God, trust in Him, and know in our hearts that we are on the winning team.

Jesus said, “Father, glorify your name!” Instead of turning away from the cross, Jesus asks that his Father be exalted. And a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” There was a time in early Jewish history when God spoke to people—the clearest example was Samuel as a young person when he was serving under Eli in the tabernacle. (Samuel 3:1-10) At the time of Jesus, the people believed that God no longer spoke to people, but he spoke to Jesus three times. At the beginning of his ministry, Mark 1:11, at the Transfiguration Mark 17:5, and during the last week of his life, in John 12:28. This last encounter turned Jesus toward Jerusalem and the cross and here when Jesus is steadied for the ordeal of the Cross four days hence. God speaks in an audible voice even today. He is present to guide and direct our way; he is not silent. He gives us his tasks but also the strength to do them.

Jesus tells those present that God's voice was for their benefit, not his. That the time has come for the prince of the world to be driven out which is what he accomplished at Calvary. Remember what I mentioned earlier that Satan has power in our lives because we give it to him. Sadly, the world as a whole gives Satan great power because it rejects the love of God and the mercy of Christ on the Cross.

As believers we are to have a joy-filled relationship with Jesus. We have a closer relationship to Jesus than those who saw him climb the hills and walk the streets of villages in Israel. How is that possible? He comes and lives in our hearts. The closer we are to Jesus the greater our joy. Winston Churchill, once said. "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." (6) Give yourself away for Jesus. Jesus was born to die for you. You were born to live for Jesus. This isn't rocket science! Live for Jesus and see what he will do with your life.

"In the 1700's Count Nicholas Zinzendorf was a wealthy man who came to support the Moravians. He was used by Christ in wonderful ways and helped spread the gospel. At one time he became friends with John and Charles Wesley and they were always close." (7) All of his life, the young count could point to one experience...which influenced him the most. In the art museum at Dusseldorf, he encountered the Savior. Seeing Domenico Feti's Ecce Homo ("Behold the man"), a portrait of the thorn-crowned Jesus, and reading the inscription below it – "I have done this for you; what have you done for me?" Zinzendorf said to himself, "I have loved Him for a long time, but I have never actually done anything for Him. From now on I will do whatever He leads me to do." (8)

Jesus was born to die for you. You were born to live for Jesus. So go and serve him in your own unique manner and live an enthusiastic, spirit-filled, joy-filled life, blessed by God. Alleluia!

Amen.

(1) NIV Compact Dictionary of the Bible p. 60

(2) Sermoncentral "Take a Deep Breath, and..." W. Leon Morrow March 30, 2009 p. 3

(3) Sermoncentral "Nailing Down Your Need for the Cross" Perry Fowler May 13, 2022 p. 5

(4) Sermoncentral "Losing to Win" Brian Bill January 22, 2017 p. 3

(5) Sermoncentral "Nailing Down Your Need for the Cross" Perry Fowler May 13, 2022 p. 3

(6) Sermoncentral "Take a Deep Breath, and..." W. Leon Morrow March 30, 2009 p. 4

(7) Ibid. p. 5

(8) Internet Christian History Institute "The Rich Young Ruler...Who Said Yes!" (Christian History Institute Issue #1 1982)