

<sup>20</sup>Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Festival. <sup>21</sup>They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we want to see Jesus." <sup>22</sup>Philip went to tell Andrew. Andrew came with Philip and told Jesus.

<sup>23</sup>Jesus answered them, "The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup>Amen, Amen, I tell you: Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it continues to be one kernel. But if it dies, it produces much grain. <sup>25</sup>Anyone who loves his life destroys it. And the one who hates his life in this world will hold on to it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup>If anyone serves me, let him follow me. And where I am, there my servant will be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

<sup>27</sup>"Now my soul is troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, this is the reason I came to this hour. <sup>28</sup>Father, glorify your name!"

A voice came from heaven: "I have glorified my name, and I will glorify it again."

<sup>29</sup>The crowd standing there heard it and said it thundered. Others said an angel talked to him. <sup>30</sup>Jesus answered, "This voice was not for my sake but for yours.

<sup>31</sup>"Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be thrown 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 what kind of death he was going to die.

The word "glory" is not always so easy to understand. We get this idea of brightness in our mind. We know that if something is glorious, it is greater than the norm. But I'm not sure we can truly conceptualize it. And yet, even though we may not be able to define it well, we can describe it in part. We get these feelings that we are seeing something glorious when we walk into a stadium or gym packed to the brim with cheering fans. We get these feelings when we stand up at the wedding processional and see the bride adorned in her beautiful white dress. We get these feelings when we get to the peak of the mountain and look out over miles of God's creation. We might not be able to define glory, but we know it when we see it, and we like it.

These glorious sights that we have taken in don't compare to the glory that our Savior bears, though. The only problem? We don't see it nearly as often as the stadiums and weddings and mountaintops. In fact, the true glory of Jesus is revealed to us only on the pages of scripture for now. Today we'll see him on his path to glory. And we'll be reminded that the cost of his glory is devotion. Devotion will be the cost for us too.

It was the Tuesday of Holy Week, and Jesus was in the temple courts teaching and preaching. And there were plenty of people to teach. Jews from all over the world were in Jerusalem for the Passover festival. So, it's no surprise that some Greek converts to Judaism among the worshippers come to Jesus' disciple Philip, one of the disciples with a Greek name. They say to Philip, "Sir, we want to see Jesus." We're not told their motivation for wanting to see Jesus. Some people wanted to see him because of their love for their Savior. Others wanted to see him in hopes that they could get something from him or put him through the paces to prove himself.

Philip hears their request and goes to Andrew, another of Jesus' disciples with a Greek name. Maybe the reason he's not willing to take this request to Jesus is because he knows what Jesus has said about how he came only for the lost sheep of Israel. But it seems like after some discussion, they decide to take this question to the Lord.

But here is Jesus' response: "The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." This doesn't sound like an answer to the question about these Greeks coming to meet Jesus. But this is what Jesus is talking about. Jesus is announcing a paradigm shift in his ministry taking place before their eyes. Remember at the wedding of

Canna, when Mary told Jesus to help but he told her it was not yet the time? Jesus repeatedly does this in his ministry. Something greater is coming later, but it's not ready yet. It's as if Jesus is signaling that there is something still waiting, something to be let loose. But now the time has come. It's as if Jesus is telling the drivers to start their engines. But what is it time to do?

It's time to be glorified. Jesus had come with the purpose of fulfilling his Father's plan, and in doing so, glorifying the Father and himself. But then Jesus describes this path of glory: "Amen, Amen, I tell you: Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it continues to be one kernel. But if it dies, it produces much grain." With the benefit of hindsight, we get what Jesus is talking about. A seed must be buried and die to produce more heads of grain. Likewise, Jesus must be buried in death to produce the fruits of his work. But this does not sound like glory.

What Jesus does here that he turns glory upside down. Death certainly doesn't seem all that glorious. In fact, death looks a lot like the opposite of glory. Nobody walks into a nursing home filled with the sick and dying and says, "Wow! What a glorious place!" Nobody stands at the side of the casket looking at the lifeless body and says, "Aw, she looks so glorious." We don't see glory in death. We see defeat in death.

And this can make Jesus a little less appealing to our human sensibilities sometimes. Our idea of glory doesn't look like death. It looks like life. It looks like winning. It looks like not only surviving but thriving. This has an affect on what we look for from Jesus. What is it that we expect from him? Well, we expect him to let none of his enemies talk down to him. We expect him to demonstrate his power in making us kings and queens of this world. But that's the prosperity gospel. That's the lie that Jesus wants nothing more for you than worldly success, that if you follow his model of living, you're life will be without hardships. This is not Jesus' ideal of glory though.

Jesus' glory is his death. Just as the seed finds its glory in being buried in the ground, so also Jesus finds his glory in being buried in the ground. And we clearly see just how important this glory is to him: "Now my soul is troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, this is the reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" Jesus is not looking forward to his death. He knows the physical, emotional, and spiritual pain ahead. But he is willing to lay down his life for a world full of sinners. This is true dedication, dedication both to the Father and to us. And we get a sampling of his glory here too. The Father's voice booms down from heaven for all to hear: "I have glorified my name, and I will glorify it again." The end of Jesus' journey of glory will be his resurrection. The life he lays down will be taken back up again in victory.

Jesus' glory is the central focus of this section. It is not about what we do for him. It's about what he has done for us. His sacrifice is the basis of everything we believe. But his devotion toward us also inspires our devotion toward him. "We love because he first loved us."

Jesus does call us to follow him though. He says, "Anyone who loves his life destroys it. And the one who hates his life in this world will hold on to it for eternal life." As Jesus often does, he simplifies the important questions of life. Do we focus on the things of this life or on the things of eternity? He goes on to say, "If anyone serves me, let him follow me. And where I am, there my servant will be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him." Our service to Jesus is following him. Our service to him is devoting ourselves to the one who is even more committed to us.

This journey will be a struggle. Following Jesus is not just coming to church to praise him and hear his word. It's living life focused on what he's done for us. It's living life with thanksgiving always on our hearts. It's denying ourselves the sinful and selfish pleasures of the world to serve him instead of ourselves. Yes, this will be a struggle. But the end of our devotion to him is glory. It's glory to the Father who created us and sent

his perfect Son into the world to die for us, his kids that never listen and always rebel. It's glory to the Son, the one who saved us and lives in us to do our God's will. And it's glory that is ours. You have a place in heaven because God has redeemed you from sin and works beautiful acts of faith in you.

But we fail in our calling, don't we? What sins cut you out at the legs? What ways do you love your life and try to cling to it? You know that devoting yourself fully to anything is not at all easy. Devotion inevitably means sacrifice. It means giving up things that would ultimately make life easier for you but would separate you from God because they are sinful. How often has our devotion run cold? How often have we fallen asleep with the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane instead of praying for strength to fight temptation? How many times have we abandoned Jesus when courage was needed, but could not be found? We have been called to glorify Jesus in our lives, but our commitment to him fails again and again.

Yet, he is faithful when we are faithless. Like I said in the introduction, devotion is the cost of our glory. But it's not our devotion that earns our glory. It's his devotion to us and through us. Jesus finishes his sermonette with this: "Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be thrown out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He is the seed that is planted so that we can bear fruit. And he will use our service to continue to draw us to himself and what he has accomplished for us. Amen.