
John 12:20-33. ²⁰ Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." ²² Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. ²³ Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ I tell you the truth, 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. ²⁵ The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. ²⁷ "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." ²⁹ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. ³⁰ Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. ³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

If you are a subscriber to the WELS daily devotions delivered online, you may remember this opening illustration from the March 13 devotion. It is an illustration worth repeating, even if you have heard it already, and it matches up rather well with our lesson for today as well. So here goes...

Author David Platt, in his book, *Radical*, tells the story of what happened when he was standing outside of a Buddhist temple in Indonesia. As he stood there, he got into a conversation with two people—a Buddhist leader and a Muslim leader. Both of them believed that, while there were superficial differences among the major religions, all of them basically taught the same thing. Then they asked David Platt what he thought. He said, *"It sounds as though you both picture God at the top of a mountain. It seems as if you believe that we are all at the bottom of the mountain, and I may take one route up the mountain, you may take another, and in the end, we will all end up in the same place."* To this, the Buddhist and the Muslim said, *"Exactly! You understand!"* But then he leaned in and said, *"Now let me ask you a question. What would you think if I told you that the God at the top of the mountain actually came down to where we are? What would you think if I told you that God doesn't wait for people to find their way to him, but instead he comes to us?"* They both thought for a moment and then responded, *"That would be great!"* David Platt then replied, *"Let me introduce you to Jesus."*

In our lesson for today, Philip and Andrew have an opportunity to introduce some individuals to Jesus. And Jesus is the one who is shown to be the glory of God. For he is the One and Only who can and will bring us into glory.

Shortly after Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, John tells us there were some Greeks among those who had gone up to Jerusalem to worship at the Passover Feast. Having been brought near to the LORD God of Israel through promise and ritual they now wanted to see the one whom the crowds declared, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD". And so

these Greeks came to Philip, with a request. ***“Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.”*** And Philip went to Andrew and together Philip and Andrew went to lead these individuals to Jesus.

And in this moment, during the early stages of Holy Week, Jesus once again makes clear the reason that he came. He came to do the work of the Father. He had not come for the adoration of the crowds nor was some political movement on his mind. He was tuned in to the fact that his death for the salvation of sinners was coming so very near. *It was for this very reason I came to this hour.* This was it, and the moment was pressing upon him. He was very troubled by the pain that he would endure, the load of sin that he was carrying would only get heavier, but this is why he came. He came to die and by his death bring life. And by accomplishing the work of the Father he would bring glory to the name of our LORD. And the as a glorious band of angels sang the good news of his birth, angels would soon shine with the glory of God at the empty tomb and announce his resurrection. But there was much to endure and to accomplish before then. But the will of the Father would be done. God’s own Son would endure the scorn and rejection of the world and yet he would willingly go to the cross to destroy the devil’s work for sinners like us.

And so Jesus engages in this unforgettable dialogue with God the Father. *Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!* Then a voice thundered from heaven, *“I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.”* The crowd was suddenly captivated by the voice and so Jesus spoke to them of the eternal significance of this moment in time and history. Despite the rejection of this world, Jesus had come to destroy the devil’s work and set men free from sin, death, and the power of hell. He was the glorious fulfillment of God’s promise of a Messiah, a Savior from sin, the giver of new and eternal life for all humankind. And so he said unto them, *“But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”*

The message of Christ crucified has always been unique and it is powerful and will always be unique and powerful. The message of Jesus is historically compelling, it is a moving true-life story that is beyond compare. It is so stunningly human and so wonderfully divine. God comes down to save his lost and condemned people. And the account of this plan is written down and recorded and preserved for billions and billions of people throughout the centuries of human existence, translated into an incredible number of different languages, and spread throughout the world for so many to hear and know and believe. For this true story not only has unforgettable details, but it is eternal in its significance and unparalleled in its importance. The Son of God allows himself to be hung up on a cross to die as the sacrifice for sin that God demanded. God himself takes on flesh and he dies to pay for the sins of the world. The sinless one hangs in our place to save us from sin. The Son of Man is lifted up for you. Gaze upon this strange wonder and be amazed by this compelling self-sacrificing love of God. Gaze upon the one who dies and is buried to bring forth abundant life for so many even still today.

This is what Jesus came to do. This is the glory of our God. This is the eternal legacy behind his name. The LORD saves his people who needed saving. The Holy God in his undeserved love that is fame, came down to save us while we were still dead in our transgressions and sins. Jesus gives us abundant and eternal life. The message of Christ crucified is not just another man-made religion about getting up to God, or getting right with God by cleansing ourselves of our wrongs. It’s about God coming down to us in the person of Jesus Christ and doing what we could not do. It’s about Jesus living a holy life in our place. It’s about Jesus Christ going to the cross to wash our sins away. He is the only one who could do it. And he went about this agonizing work in his immeasurable love for you. And that love of God seen so clearly in the person and work of Jesus

Christ draws us in and compels us to serve a God who promises that he will forgive our sins. He says to us in Christ that he will remember our wickedness no more and he instead he will graciously strengthen us for a life of faithful service and welcome us to our eternal home prepared for us in glory.

This is the good news the Bible has for you. And it is the most important news that you will ever receive or hear. But so often we don't treat it that way. Instead, we bury in the back pages of our life. We regard so many other things as so much more worthy of our time. Shake off that vanity of the moment that clings to you. The prince of this world will try to use the things of this world to cover over and crowd out of our lives the most important message of salvation that Christ died and rose for you. Shake off that fog that says the things that are happening right now are so monumental that you don't have time to think of your eternity. Look up, see the one lifted up for all sinners, of all time. Listen to the voice that thunders and wakes you up from your spiritual slumber. The glory of God is right here wrapped up in the Word made flesh. And he goes to shed his blood and die for your sins. He goes to die and rise again to bring us eternal life. What we are about to commemorate, as we inch once more to Holy Week, is this act of love that is so epic that it has eternal staying power. And in a way, this good news that is ancient and familiar has a certain freshness this year as we are able to gather for Holy Week and Easter Sunday in a way that we were not able to at this time last year. Yet still, we are tempted to let the ever-changing news of the day, work drama, or our own personal interests and dilemmas, take the place of chief importance in our lives. As if there could ever be an earthly cause, any political issue, cultural landmark, global crisis, or personal problem or accomplishment that could ever overtake the importance of Christ's death and resurrection. Yet we live our lives this way all the time.

Look up dear friends at the one who is lifted up for you. Soak in this good news like sunshine on a spring day and rejoice in the new life and peace and joy that Christ brings. Gaze up the glory of God in the face of Jesus, the suffering servant who gave himself as a ransom for the many. Be drawn in by his amazing love and go and live in the new and abundant life he brings. The one who dies and is laid into the ground brings forth life in our hearts as we are crucified with him and so we no longer live for ourselves but for him who died for us and was raised again.

Lean into that unique and important message God came down to find you, to save you, to rescue you, and bring you to himself so that one day you will share in his glory. This is a message that rises to the top. It is our greatest treasure. It is ours to celebrate, proclaim, and share.

And there are people out there for you to share it with. Family, friends, fellow believers, and those who would be blessed to know Jesus better and to see him more clearly. And they might be closer than you think. Our lesson tells us of some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. They had heard of the God of Israel, they had heard of the promises of God, the promises of a Messiah, and they had heard about Jesus. They had a loose connection with God and heavenly things, and they were curious to know more about the one who came in the name of the LORD. And so they came to Philip because they had a loose connection to this disciple with a Greek sounding name and they asked Philip if they could see Jesus.

There are plenty in our communities with a loose connection to Jesus. Somewhere along the line, they had heard about the God of Israel, the God of the Bible, Grandma and Grandpa had brought them to church for Christmas and Easter. But their view of things is still a bit unclear. They may be interested or curious, but for one reason or another, they are kept at a distance. Maybe it is a cultural thing, maybe it is a small-town thing: how could ever step foot in that

church with my last name or because of the thing that they have done that everybody knows about. Maybe it is a certain church thing, that they grew up in this vein of teaching or doctrine but have never really known what the Bible is all about and they would simply like to see Jesus.

You can be a Philip. You can introduce others to Jesus. You can show them who he is and what God has done for us by sending his Son. Go to the Word, open a Bible and read through the gospels with your family and friends. Share the bible lessons that you have learned since Sunday School. Speak of your favorite passages. Speak of the details of Holy Week that are once more fresh in your mind, thanks to midweek services. Tell of your Savior's forgiveness and love. Give the reason for the hope that you have. Speak of the rest and peace and guidance and strength that you have in your crucified and risen Lord. Invite your friends and neighbors to church, share the link to our online services and bible studies, invite them to talk to your pastor. Go to Jesus in prayer and ask for his help. Like Philip and Andrew bring others to see Jesus.

For Christ is our Savior who is the very message that rises above. This is the glory of God, which is seen in the face of Christ. The name of Jesus is recognized throughout the world. His name and the message of salvation through him has endured through the ages, through countless crises, through many wars and pandemics, and global turmoil, through the rise and fall of nations, and the ups and downs of life this constant beacon of hope has cast forth its brilliant light that brings life, that heals and restores, and satisfies like nothing else. The devil with his lies and the world with its fleeting promises and conflicting fads will be shown to be vain and powerless as Christ comes with his everlasting message of life and salvation. This is the message that the ancient and enduring church was built upon and this is the message that is proclaimed by Christians today and always. High above the exhausting buzz of the every day, high above our trite and silly scuffles, agendas, and man-made delusions. High above daily dilemmas, the latest personal or work crisis, high above the misplaced cultural zeal of tolerance and intolerance, high above the moving target of human moral standards, high above it all is the cross of Christ. Standing above all of this is the ancient and eternal source of peace and rest that draws us in. God so loved the whole world that he promised and gave us his Son. God came down to save us to bring us to the heights of glory he lowered himself into our human existence, suffered and died, such a horrible death that we could not forget or overstate his love for us. And this great love of God in Christ Jesus draws us in.

Lean in and listen to that good news, lean in and share that good news with others. God so loved the world that he came down to bring us to himself. God so loved the world that he humbled himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross so that you and I and billions more might live in glory with God forever! The Son of Man is lifted up. Gaze upon the one whom the Scriptures foretold and see how he gives his life so that countless others may live with him in glory! Praise and glory be to the LORD God, our Savior Jesus Christ! Amen.