



## **SUNDAY MATTERS**

### **Week # 5 – Fifth Sunday of Lent**

John tells us that some “Greeks” go up to worship for the festival of the Passover. This is a curious detail isn’t it? It raises all sorts of questions. First, why are some Greek folks going to worship at a Jewish festival? More than likely, these Greek folks were what were often called “God-fearers.” As Greek and Jewish culture cross-pollinated in the period before the Roman Empire, some Greek folks became interested in the God Jewish folks. Thus, by Jesus’ time some Greek folks could be classified as Gentile believers, while others actually converted to Judaism and were circumcised. So, their presence at the festival might be understandable.



Things get more interesting when these Greek folks come to Philip, and they say, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip goes and tells Andrew. Then Andrew and Philip both go to tell Jesus. This is also a curious detail. It seems clear that something special is happening. Their activity mirrors what happened back when Jesus called the disciples in the beginning of John. There is a chain of witness into which were invited at the beginning of John, and it seems, into which we are now invited. When Andrew and Philip tell Jesus that these Greek folks want to see him, Jesus enigmatically answers, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” What? further we go, the more questions we find. How does the report that these Greek folks garner the response, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified”?

This is one of those many examples for John where there is more than one level of meaning. Philip and Andrew appear to be dealing the issue at hand: some Greek folks want to meet Jesus. Yet, Jesus’ response indicates that the appearance of these Greek folks signals something much deeper. Misunderstandings like these frequently occur in the Gospel of John. At the beginning of the exchange someone will ask Jesus a question or make a request, and Jesus provides an answer that appears incongruent with what the other person has said.

It’s like when Mary tells Jesus “They have no wine” at the wedding at Cana, and he responds, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” You get the feeling that regularly when people ask Jesus regular questions, he starts talking about this “hour” when people just want him to answer their question! These misunderstandings allow Jesus both the draw the listener into a deeper meaning, as he clears up the misunderstanding. This is exactly what happens in our passage for this morning. After responding to Andrew and Philip, he begins to teach and elaborate on his confusing statement.

What is the “hour” that Jesus keeps talking about? What is this hour that the arrival of these Greek folks has signaled? The small parable that Jesus tells next helps to point towards what this hour looks like:



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. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

This parable comes across as more straightforward than the parables we encounter in other Gospels, even though it uses imagery we see in those others parables. A seed remains only a lone seed. Yet, if that seed goes into the ground and dies, it bears fruit. Death precedes new life. This “hour” about which Jesus is speaking is his the coming suffering he will endure as he is beaten, tortured, and hung up on a cross. John tells us, “He said this to indicate the kind of death was to die.” Jesus moves quickly to draw us into this hour. Just as the seed that does not die will remain alone and unable to bear fruit, those who cling desperately to their own lives will suffer the same fate as the seed. Rather, to serve the Father means that we are willing to enter into this hour with Jesus.

Clearly, this is a fearful thought. As he approaches his death, Jesus names his own soul is troubled. Yet, he remains resolute because his whole mission, his whole ministry, has been driving towards this hour. Losing ourselves, entering into this hour with Jesus is, I think, a troubling thought to us as well. Yet, we do not enter into this moment alone. Jesus promises that if we follow him, he will be where we are. And as we see throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus is always located where the Father is. Though our natural inclination is to cling to our lives, to cling to ourselves, to cling to our identities, it is much better to be where Jesus is because Jesus is where the Father is, and where they are, there is life. For life to happen, death must first happen. We must lose ourselves. It is, as Jesus says, “the reason [he has] come to this hour.”

Clinging to and trying to preserve our seedy solitary existence is often the way that we keep others at a distance. We create ourselves often over against those whom we don’t want to be like. Yet, when we begin to lose ourselves in Jesus, and through Jesus, in the Father we find ourselves drawn to love one another. It is those moments that we begin to get a taste of what true life is like. When we follow Jesus, and we find ourselves willing to lose our life as we enter into Jesus’ death, all of the things of this world that actually bring death are exposed and put on display. All the lies that shape our lives are exposed.

This is where the arrival of the Greeks comes in. Jesus says, “when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself.” The Greeks what one commentator calls “an advance scouting party” of this reality They are the first fruits of Jesus’ drawing of all people to himself. These Greek folks are the first fruits of the walls breaking down that maintain separation between one another. They are the beginning of there being “no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female” (Galatians 3:28).

That this “hour” has come for the judgment of this world, and the “ruler of this world” is being driven out. The “world” here is not simply creation. Rather, it is “the fallen realm that exists in estrangement from God and is organized in opposition to God’s purposes.” The world represents all those forces that maintain the kind of brokenness we see all around us where we find ourselves divided from one another.

This brokenness is often what we must conquer in order to truly “see Jesus”. And conquering it happens best in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. At times there are things which can hold us back – almost quarantine us from growing in our relationship with Jesus... often it is Sin - and when we recognize that, it becomes a moment where we ask ‘ What Are You Waiting For?’ [We explore the Sacrament of Reconciliation and prepare for our Day of Mercy on March 22, 2018](#)

*Some things to consider as we Make Sunday Matter*

- Offer a Holy Hour in Adoration for the intentions of our Parish and its Pastor.
- How can you prepare for Holy Week?
- How can you prepare for the [Day of Mercy on March 22?](#)

*[Make sure to check out the Video Follow Up Each Week on our website](#)*

*See you Sunday!*