

As Christians we want to glorify God. We take to heart the words of Paul, **“Weather you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31).**¹ But what exactly does it mean to glorify God? Certainly we glorify God when we praise him in our songs. But Paul’s words are broader than that. He says, **“Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”** How do we glorify God not just in our songs but in our everyday life? Well in the Gospel today, Jesus talks about glorifying God. He indicates how he is going to glorify God. And he also talks about how his followers, us included, will glorify God. But it’s important that we start with how Jesus glorified God because that will give us the example and the motivation for how to glorify God in our lives.

How did Jesus glorify God? Well, last week we heard that God loved the world, the whole world. Jesus glorified God by loving the whole world too. Our passage for today begins, **“Now there were some Greeks who went up to worship at the festival” (John 12:20).** These Greeks were Gentiles. They were not Jews. But they had come to know the true God and they had come up to Jerusalem to worship him. God loves the world. He loves every nation in the world.

These Greeks had come to believe in the true God. They had also heard about Jesus and they wanted to see Jesus. It says, **“They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee with a request, ‘Sir,’ they said, ‘we would like to see Jesus.’” (John 12:21)** This is a wonderful request. And it is our request too. We would like to see Jesus. I remember when I was in seminary, in the opening service for the school year one year, one of the seminary professors preached a sermon on this passage, and he said you have come to school because you want to see Jesus. And that’s the same reason why you have come to church today. You have come to church because you want to see Jesus. You want to here about his love for you and experience his forgiveness and grace.

These Greeks were drawn to Jesus. And Jesus has also drawn us to himself. At the end of the lesson Jesus said, **“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (12:32).** God the Father loves the world. Jesus does too. Jesus died for the sins of all the people in the world. And he draws people to himself in faith, including you, including me.

That really is quite a striking passage, isn’t it? **“When I am lifted up from the earth, I’m going to draw all people to myself” (12:32).** Being lifted up refers to his crucifixion. And he says when he is lifted up he is going to draw all people to himself. It’s kind of like Jesus is a magnet drawing people up to himself. The fact that he is drawing people to himself, implies that he is saving them from something. If he is drawing people to himself, then he is drawing people away from something. What is Jesus drawing people away from?

Well, in our passage Jesus says, **“Now is the time for judgment on this world” (12:31).** This world in all its sin, that we’ve been a part of. We have been a part of the sinfulness of this world with our selfishness and with our sinful actions. We deserve to be judged along with the world. But Jesus saved us from that. He paid for the sins of the world and everybody who believes in Jesus is saved from condemnation. When Jesus drew us to himself by dying for our sins and calling us to faith, he was drawing us away from condemnation. He was also drawing us away from the devil’s power. Jesus says, **“Now is the prince of this world driven out” (12:31).** The devil had us in his power but Jesus drew us away from Satan and drew us to himself.

Jesus glorified God by loving the world. He loved us by paying for our sins and drawing us to himself. But in order to do that Jesus had to die. Jesus glorified God by obediently dying in our place. Jesus said, **“The hour**

¹ All Scripture quotations in this sermon are taken from the NIV.

has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, 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" (12:24). If a seed doesn't die, if it doesn't go into the ground and turn into something else, then it can't produce a tree, it can't produce any fruit. But if the seed dies, that is if it goes into the ground and turns into something else, then it produces much fruit. If it's a grape vine, then it produces many grapes. If it's an apple tree then that one seed ends up producing many apples.

If Jesus wouldn't have died, then he wouldn't have saved us. But because he died, he gave all of us spiritual life. It has been well said that Jesus' death gives life. And Jesus's death didn't just give life to one person. It gave life to everyone who believes in him. Jesus' death produced many living seeds.

Now that wasn't easy for Jesus. It wasn't easy for Jesus to go through the suffering and death on the cross. He says, "**Now my soul is troubled**" (John 12:27). Jesus was true man. He wasn't a robot. Jesus was troubled when he thought about his upcoming suffering and death. But he willingly went through it, because he loved us and he wanted to glorify his Father. He says, "**Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name**" (12:27-28). How did Jesus glorify God? He glorified God by willingly going to suffering and death to take away our sins.

And the Father responded from heaven, "**I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again**" (12:28). How did the fact that Jesus willingly went to suffering and death glorify God's name? It glorified God's name because by Jesus' suffering and death, God established a new covenant with us in which he promises to forgive our sins.² We heard about this new covenant in the first lesson from Jeremiah 31. There God said, "**I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel ... I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more**" (31:31, 34). This glorifies God's *name*. When God explained his name, the LORD, to Moses he said that he is the God who is rich in mercy, who is abounding in love and faithfulness, and who forgives wickedness, rebellion and sin. God accomplished our forgiveness through the death of Jesus, and so the death of Jesus glorifies God's name. God glorified his name through the death of Jesus. When we think of God, we think of the one who saved us from our sins through Jesus.

That's how Jesus glorified God. How do we glorify God? Jesus glorified God by dying for our sins. We glorify God by going through a kind of death as well. Jesus was talking about himself but his words also have application for us when he said, "**Very truly I tell you, 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). "Produces many seeds" can also be translated "bears much fruit." Now that phrase "bears much fruit" might remind you of some other things Jesus said. In John chapter 15 Jesus said, "**I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. ... This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit...**" (John 15:8). When we bear fruit for God that gives God glory. We Christians want to glorify God. How can we glorify God? We can glorify God by bearing fruit for him. Jesus said, "**This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit**" (John 15:8). Bearing fruit for God means doing things that are pleasing to him. It means serving others in love. But here's the surprising thing. If we stay with the analogy of the seed. The seed has to die in order to bear much fruit. And in order to bear much fruit for God, we too, in a sense, have to die. Now I do not mean that we physically have to die. But in order to bear fruit for God in order to glorify God, there are some things that we are going to have to die to.

² I owe this insight to a discussion at our pastors' circuit meeting. I owe this thought especially to Pastor Derek Bartelt of First Lutheran, Lake Geneva, and Pastor Art Faught of St. John's, Slades Corners.

Bearing fruit for God means serving others. But serving others means sacrificing your time. And so maybe there is some selfishness that we need to die to. God loved the world, and so maybe there is some hatred that we need to die to. In order to bear fruit for God, there are things we need to die to.

That fits with what Jesus says next: **“But if it dies it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (12:24-25)**. It is a danger for us Christians to get so caught up in this life and so caught up in this world, that it becomes more important than our eternal life. Instead of that let’s make the most important thing in this world hearing the word of God for our salvation and glorifying God by serving others.

The disciples are a great example of this. They dedicated their lives to serving Jesus even though that would mean much suffering for them. Some things Jesus says here sound a lot like what he says to Peter at the end of the Gospel of John. Here Jesus says, **“Whoever serves me must follow me.” (John 12:26)** And then later Jesus says, **“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.’ He said this to indicate the kind of death he was going to die” (John 12:32-33)**. Now this sounds a lot like what Jesus said to Peter at the end of John. In John 21 Jesus said to Peter, **“Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.’ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, ‘Follow me.’” (John 21:18-19)**³ This indicates that Peter was martyred. By the mercy of God, we probably won’t be martyred. But let’s follow Jesus by dying to our sins, so that we can glorify God by bearing much fruit. Amen.

³ I owe the connection between these two passages to Baur-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 3rd edition (Chicago: University Press, 2000), 920.