

Lent is a time for reflection, and tonight we reflect on this: *Death and glory* are two words that do not go together, right? Glory is what we want, it's acclaim and fame, it's success. But death? How can death be glory? Well, look to Christ. **His final steps led to some Greeks.**

"Sir, we would like to see Jesus" (12:21), they say to Phillip. How often does that happen? Somebody actually asks you to show them Jesus? Usually it's the other way around. We ask them, "Would you like to see Jesus?"

But not today. Today, Greeks want to see Jesus. They are converts to Judaism, in Jerusalem to **worship at the festival (12:21)**, the Passover. They've heard about Jesus, about the crowds, miracles, and exorcisms that follow him wherever he goes. Who wouldn't want to see him? They know he is at the Feast, so they make their simple request. **"Sir, we would like to see Jesus" (12:21).**

Of course, they have no idea what that their request means. **"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (12:23).** Jesus' hour of glory has come. And you ask, "There's more glory?" More than crowds, miracles, and exorcisms? What's going to happen?

"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). Death is going to happen. Jesus says that he is glorified, when he dies. Who talks like that? Glory is money, honor, praise! Death ends all that. Death is the end of glory. But Jesus' glory comes in death. Not in crowds, miracles, and exorcisms. Jesus' glory is gory glory. Is that the Jesus the Greeks want to see? Is that the Jesus you want to see?

Before you answer, understand his parable. Bury some seeds. They die. In time they grow into plants that produce many more seeds. For a seed to fulfill its seedy destiny, it must die. If it doesn't die, it remains a single, fruitless seed.

All this means that death is Jesus' destiny. It's why he came **(12:27)**. Jesus' hour of glory is when he dies in darkness on the cross. It's glorious because the world lives by the death of Christ. His death produces much life. His death produces us, people who want to see him. If that's not glorious, I don't know what is. But you should know that Jesus isn't the only one who shows that death and glory go hand in hand.

"Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me" (12:25-26). We show that death and glory go hand in hand. But doesn't that sound odd? Hate your life to keep it? What does that even mean?

Well, you cling to what you love. You treasure what you love more than anything else. But you push away what you hate. You part with what you hate so that you can hold on to what you love. Why? Because what you love is way more valuable.

So which is worth more? The seventy or eighty years you have in this world, or the infinite years you have in eternity? Jesus says eternity. He says that you are not attached to your life. Your great love is not money, jobs, toys, vacations, or health.

In fact, when you compare them to eternity, you hate them all. Push away the world. Deny yourself, take up your cross, follow Jesus (Mark 8:34). Hate your life to keep it.

That's what Jesus does. The day he says all this is Tuesday. He dies three days later, on Friday. Will it be easy for him? **"Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'?" (12:27).** Jesus is troubled by what he must do.

So is Jesus' job easy? It sounds easy. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God promised, "I will make a new covenant. I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Jeremiah 31:31, 34). The new covenant means forgive and forget. Sounds easy enough. But two days later, on Holy Thursday, Jesus mentions this new covenant: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20).

Wickedness is forgiven and sins are forgotten by blood being poured out. When is that easy? We are so used to seeing Jesus die that it doesn't trouble us. But it does trouble Jesus: "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death" (Hebrews 5:7). "Father, take this cup from me" (Mark 14:36).

Wouldn't you say the same thing? Don't you say the same thing when following Jesus, when being where he is, means that you must hate your life? When you ask, "Is it even worth it to be a Christian?" Are you worth it? Are you worth Jesus' trouble, when you sin like he isn't worth yours?

Well, what does he say? **"Now my soul 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" (12:27).** You are worth the trouble. The very reason Jesus came to this world was to live and die for you.

Jesus is determined to die. He has the Father's approval to die. **"Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again" (12:28).** Behind Jesus are thirty-three years of sinless life. Ahead of Jesus is the agony of Good Friday.

Both glorify the Father. Both are done for you. In fact, everything that Jesus does, he does for you. Even that voice from heaven is for you. Jesus says, **"This voice was for your benefit, not mine" (12:30).**

So no, *death* and *glory* are not two words that go together. But here the Father tells us that they do. This voice makes us certain that the dark Friday of Jesus' death really is a good Friday. It's good because his death is God's judgment on sin. **"Now is the time for judgment on this world" (12:31).** Jesus is judged instead of the world.

He suffers because he does not want you to suffer. And in the grand scheme of things, Jesus' death for our sins accomplishes more than our death because of sin ever could! Jesus' death is the exorcism of this world. **"Now the prince of this world will be driven out" (12:31).**

When Jesus dies, he does for the world what he did for so many – he drives out the devil. "This world's prince may still scowl fierce as he will, he can harm us none. He's judged; the deed is done! One little word can fell him" (CW #863:3). That word is Jesus.

The Savior who says: **"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (12:32).** He announces this on Tuesday. Three days later, on Friday, they will see it. So will we. His death is a magnet that draws us to him.

Those Greeks don't know what they are asking to see. But you do. I pray that whenever you enter this building you think, **"We would like to see Jesus" (12:21).** Because you will see him. In every hymn, in every Reading, in every liturgical rite and ritual, you will see Jesus. He draws us to himself in words, in water, in wine and bread. Only Jesus draws you to heaven and life eternal. Happy Lent. Amen.