

Counterintuitive Glory

- Dear fellow trvlrs on this Lenten journey that leads to cross & empty tomb: for sev wks now we've been wlkng w/J as he resolutely apprchs Jrslm. He's man on mission; detrmnd face torture/agony/brutlty of crucfxn, and all whips, punches, beatngs, thorns, & mockery that'd go w/it. Knows exctly what's coming his way, and faces it head-on. And today we hear J speak re this horrific exprnc as his glory. Listen what says: vs. 23, 28. This is about J's dth/cross, and how cross'd bring J glory! And that is simply cntrnttv! Contrary to common-sense – that's what cntrnttv means: going vs normal logic, vs what you'd typically, intuitively expect; it doesn't make sense; it's cntrnttv. The Romans had any #/ways end smone's life – some of which, in their minds, were more dignfd/glorfd. Crucfxn: oppst; most humltng, embrssng, inhumane way to die. And yet, knowing that he'd be crcfd, J speaks of cross as his glory. And, to us, that makes no sense; it goes vs logic; it's cntrnttv; it's a cntrnttv glory.
- This rdng begins w/sev Grk ppl, possibly converts to Judaism, asking to see J – which not cntrnttv at all. This all takes place on PS, after a whole crowd/ppl'd just welcmd this famous, public, contrvrsl tchr. These Grks wanted see J, talk w/him. And J: vs. 23. It's finally come! For his whole min, J been saying, **“My hour has not yet come” (Jn 2:4)**. He'd perform mrcl and tell ppl not to tell anyone re it, bec his hour had not yet come. But now, on PS, mere days from cross, J: vs. 23.
- And he explains this cntrnttv glory w/prbl. Vs. 24. It may at first seem cntrnttv that a dead seed, falling to grnd, could produce anythng good. But you/I both know that only when a seed is planted/buried will it produce a crop. My dad & I used plant garden. We'd plant sweet corn, potatoes, peas. We'd furrow trough in dirt, drop seeds into soil; and later in summer we'd enjoy fruits/labor. Seeds left in pouch, kept fr being planted, do no good – just like a Sav kept fr cross/being buried does no good. Vs. 24, lit: much fruit. In this prbl, J is the seed that dies, is buried, and produces Xians. The dth/J produces Xians, who rely entirely on Xp, who trust in Xp alone for life & etrn life – ppl like you/me. We are the much fruit, the many seeds J is talking re here. And smday in hvn we're going see the many seeds, the huge garden – the multds/ppl gathered arnd throne/Lamb. But in order for that glory to be reality, smthng cntrnttv has to happen: seed has to die & be buried; Son/Man to be crucified & buried.
- So what we really need focus on today: how GF is cntrnttv. It goes vs our common sense. If battle to save hmnty is fght btwn almighty God & his most pwrfl enemy Stn, and if cntlss souls hang in balance, is it really best solutn for God to become man, and be killed by man, in order to save man? What?! Who wld've thght of that?! What military strategist wld've ever come up w/that plan?! GF looks like a failed plan, like Stn's triumph, not God's! This pitiful figure hngs on cross, and that's our solutn, that's smhow glorious?! It seems as ridicls as, for exmpl, Allied troops in WW2 landing at Omaha Bch, then immdly surrndrng to Axis powers; or American scientists devlpng atomic bomb, then sharing design plans w/Japanese. It's crazy! At first glance, GF looks crazy – like God is surrendering to Satan! Cntrnttv!
- Now, I know we all know that GF is not crazy. GF: most pwrful display God's love for us and most profnd act of God's salvtn. But the cntrnttv nature of Xp on cross makes me think: how many other times does God act in our lives for our good, and we doubt his love/goodnss and think his decisions are crazy, bec they seem cntrnttv: don't make sense to us; go vs our logic. God says loves me, yet allows this hap; therefore can't be trusted, or he's not actly as pwrfl or loving as he makes self out to be. That's how our common-sense logic leads us to think. How about you? In your life, what trbls, hrdshps, diffclt times have arisen that've caused you dbt God? What has God, in love, allowd you endure that seems cntrnttv? The challenge for us: we often fail see big pic. It's really no diff than J telling Pt he'd suf/die; and Pt saying “Nvr, Lord! Nvr hap to you!” – and J replying “Get behind me, Stn; your human thinking is keeping you fr seeing big pic” (Mt 16:22). In our lives as Xians we must always keep big pic before us. Our Sav suffered to save us; and we are connected to him, which means this: vs. 25-26.

- To wrld, GF seems like foolshnss! But Paul: **“The msg/cross: foolshnss to those who are perishng, but to us who are being saved it is the pwr/God... We prch Xp crcfd: a stmbng block to Jews and foolshnss to Gents, but to those whom God has called, both Jews & Grks, Xp the pwr/God and wisdom/God” (1 Cor 1:18-24).** IOW, the msg/cross may seem cntrnttv. But God used the cross to bring us salvtn, and to bring J glory.
- Which is why J: vs. 27. Sounds lot like Gethsmn: **“My Fr, if it is possbl, may this cup be taken fr me. Yet not as I will, but as you will” (Mt 26:39).** Here we see abslt detrmntn of our Sav to face cross for us; and then we hear voice/Fr! When J says vs. 28-30. And I think J had your benefit in mind when said that, bec ppl there didn’t even undrstnd it; but you do. The only other times the Fr spoke fr hvn during J’s min: at bap and transfig. Fr will remain silent on GF (J: “My God, why forsaken”); and Fr will let the Easter res speak for itself. But w/booming voice fr hvn, God Fr reinforces, for J & us, that the dth/Xp/cross, though cntrnttv, is indeed truly glorious.
- There’s smthng glorious J says at very end of this rdng, smthng so profound/cntrnttv that I want all of us to tuck it away in our hrts forever: vs. 32-33. So he’s not talking re his res; talking re crcfxn. Now, on Easter Sun and for rest our lives and for eternity we will praise J w/shouts of Alleluia for his res & prom of our res. But today J wants us focus on his cross, when he is lifted up fr earth. Remem Gos fr last Sun? **“Just as Moses lifted up snake in wildrns, so Son/Man must be lifted up, that evone who bels may have etrnal life in him” (Jn 3:14-15).** It’s same msg here: vs. 32. So, for the rest of our lives, we will look at the cross, and think of J on the cross, and say, “That: my Sav; how much he loves me; what I deserve, but; what he did for me, to save me, bec loves me. That: fulfillment of Gen 3:15, crushing of serpent’s head, striking of Son’s heal; how **“prince of this world”** is **“driven out”**”; the single event arnd which all of human history revolves. And so that: my life; what gives meaning to my life and what gives me faith in my etrnal life; what forgvs all of my sins; why I dedicate my life to Xp crucfd – stmbng block to some, foolshnss to others, but the wisdom & pwr/God to me. That cross is evrthng to me!” Vs. 32. Like a magnet, J has drawn us to him; we want to see J, just like those Grks – bec we know/bel, even counterintuitively, that the cross/Xp is the true glory of God, and our glory, as well. Vs. 23. Time has come. HW is in one week. Make sure you’re ready. God bless your Lenten journey w/J to the cross.

John 12:20-33

²⁰ Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. 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 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. ²⁵ Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their 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 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. 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 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.