

I.N.I.

Palm Sunday
March 20, 2016
John 12:20-27

In Christ Jesus, our welcomed King, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Even though we are celebrating Palm Sunday today, our sermon text takes place on Monday, the day after. The city was filled with people from all over. Jewish believers with their families were in the capital city for the Passover, one of the greatest celebrations of the Jews. But even Gentile converts came. These proselytes were Gentiles who were brought to faith in the Jehovah God and the Promised Messiah.

As we heard in our Gospel reading much of Jerusalem came out on Sunday to welcome Jesus, to praise Him as their Lord with Hosannas, waving palm branches in the air, paving the way with their coats. With the huge crowds, probably not everybody got the glimpse of Jesus that they wanted. Our text tells us some foreigners, Greek proselytes who had come up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast came up to Philip with a request, **"SIR, WE WISH TO SEE JESUS."**

Perhaps they sought out Philip because he had a Greek name. It is unlikely that they knew him since they called him, "sir." It is also unlikely that they had ever met Jesus before, because of the way they phrased their request--- **WE WISH TO SEE JESUS**. They would not recognize Him unless He was pointed out to them. They wanted a glimpse of Him, to see Him, the One they probably had heard so much about.

We are also not sure why Philip went to Andrew. Perhaps he wanted to know if Andrew thought Jesus would mind. But that is not really important. What is important is how Jesus responds to their request. We don't know if Jesus later granted their request, but the request evokes a serious response from the Lord.

Jesus does not want us to consider so much, "We want to see in Jesus" but rather, "What does *Jesus* want us to see?" That He answers very clearly in the words before us. He answered the relayed request with one of His "I tell you the truth" statements: **BUT JESUS ANSWERED THEM, SAYING, "THE HOUR HAS COME THAT THE SON OF MAN SHOULD BE GLORIFIED. MOST ASSUREDLY, I SAY TO YOU, UNLESS A GRAIN OF WHEAT FALLS INTO THE GROUND AND DIES, IT REMAINS ALONE; BUT IF IT DIES, IT PRODUCES MUCH GRAN. HE WHO LOVES HIS LIFE WILL LOSE IT, AND HE WHO HATES HIS LIFE IN THIS WORLD WILL KEEP IT FOR ETERNAL LIFE. IF ANYONE SERVES ME, LET HIM FOLLOW ME; AND WHERE I AM, THERE MY SERVANT WILL BE ALSO. IF ANYONE SERVES ME, HIM MY FATHER WILL HONOR. NOW MY SOUL IS TROUBLED, AND WHAT SHALL I SAY? 'FATHER, SAVE ME FROM THIS HOUR'? BUT FOR THIS PURPOSE I CAME TO THIS HOUR."**

Is Jesus completely changing the subject? No. He is giving an illustration of what He wants all of His believers to see.

I TELL YOU THE TRUTH . . . IF ONE DIES, IT PRODUCES LIFE FOR MANY

I. JESUS WANTS US TO SEE THAT OUT OF DEATH COMES LIFE

UNLESS A GRAM OF WHEAT FALLS INTO THE GROUND AND DIES, IT REMAINS ALONE; BUT IF IT DIES, IT PRODUCES MUCH GRAM. I know this is talking about wheat, but since I plant a lot of sweet corn, we can use that also as a comparison. Think of a cob of corn. Do you know how many kernels of corn can be found on one cob? An average ear has about 16 rows, with 40 kernels per row. Over 600 kernels of corn, all from one seed that is placed in the ground, where it dies in germination, decays, and then sprouts. Miraculously, **OUT OF DEATH COMES LIFE**, abundant life---some 600 seeds out of one.

Jesus knew that was not just the case with a kernel of wheat or corn. Jesus knew that was true of Him. In fact, that was the very reason for which He was born. He was born to die. How completely opposite that is of us! We were created and born to live. Now it is true because of sin we are born to die, but that is not our purpose, it's a result. The wages of sin is death. But that's not our purpose. God made us to live. On the sixth day of creation, God breathed into Adam "the breath of life," not the "breath of death."

But not for Jesus. He took on human life, so that He could die. As one commentator wrote: "Jesus inhaled the breath of life, so that He willingly could exhale His breath in death."

Why would Jesus die? We read our text from a different version, **"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."**

Jesus didn't want to be the single seed on the cob of eternal life. Jesus wanted and wants fellowship with us. He wants your kernel and my kernel right next to Him on that cob. Isn't that humbling, especially considering how many times we try to run away from Him and hide our fellowship with God?

Oh sure, I want to be with God on Sunday morning when I'm in church, but I'm not so sure I want fellowship with God when I skip church on Sunday for other reasons.

We want fellowship with God at our wedding ceremonies, but I'm not so sure we want fellowship with God when we are having an argument with our spouse and are angry and upset and do not want to forgive each other.

We want fellowship with God as we bring our babies to be baptized, but I'm not so sure we want fellowship with God when we fail to take the time and effort to make their Savior the first priority in our children's lives.

We want fellowship with God; we want him standing right beside us when we're in times of trouble, but I'm not so sure we want God standing next to us when we get in trouble by our own actions.

Jesus wanted to bring life to us and wants to share life with us. He knew if that was going to happen, sin needed to be paid

for, because sin is the big separator. So how do we get rid of sin? Being better doesn't do it! If we're going to pay for sins, we'd have to pay for them in hell, thus being eternally separated from Jesus.

But if sin was paid by Him the perfect Man, if sin were paid by the innocent death of the Son of God, He could give us life. And so He did it. But as He looked ahead to the whip ripping His back, the thorns pressing on His skull, the nails piercing His hands, His Father's wrath looming over His head, He was troubled. **NOW MY SOUL IS TROUBLED, AND WHAT SHALL I SAY? 'FATHER, SAVE ME FROM THIS HOUR'? BUT FOR THIS PURPOSE I CAME TO THIS HOUR.**

So determined. So steadfast. Because He knew that out of His death comes life to us. But that's not all that Jesus wants us to see.

II. HE WANTS US TO SEE THAT OUT OF LIFE COMES DEATH

After giving His illustration of the wheat, Jesus continues His "I tell you the truth" statement, **HE WHO LOVES HIS LIFE WILL LOSE IT, AND HE WHO HATES HIS LIFE IN THIS WORLD WILL KEEP IT FOR ETERNAL LIFE.**

We love our lives. By nature, we love ourselves. By nature, the most important people in my life is me, myself and I. My Old Adam believes I'm number one. Whatever is done in my best interests is what matters most. That's who we are by nature. Just watch a baby—have you seen anything so helpless, yet also so selfish! Feed me! Change me! Hold me! Rock me!

And by nature, things don't change with age. What am I going to get out of this relationship? What am I going to get out of this job? When are you going to pay attention to me? How do you think I look? What's most important is how I feel.

But Jesus changes our perspective. By God's grace, when the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts we realize that through Jesus' death we have eternal life, the life we loved—the life that was all about me—doesn't look so appealing anymore. In fact, it begins to die. That's why Jesus can say not only out of death comes life, but also **OUT OF LIFE COMES DEATH**. The life we get from our Savior means death to our old self.

Now that does not sound good at all to our old self so we need to stop listening to the Old Adam and listen to the New Man who heeds God's Word. Hearing God's Word and with the New Man in control we can live a life where we're empowered to say "no" to temptations and Satan's attacks. A life where we can bravely shoo away the devil like he's a little pest rather than a fearful roaring lion. A life where the grave looks like an entrance door to a new home instead of an exit out of this one. That's what it's like when the old self is dying. Instead of being enslaved, we're free. Free to serve a loving Savior who was willing to die for us. Free to serve a living Savior who will raise us up to serve Him perfectly in heaven.

The old self won't die easily. In fact it dies through Godly repentance but comes back day after day after day. It is a

constant and daily battle. But the new life we have from Jesus will give us power to withstand the old self with all its schemes and attacks. And one day, when Jesus calls us home to His side, He'll put the Old Adam permanently to death. It can't and won't go with us into the grave. The eternal life we have will mean death to our old self.

Today we have begun Holy Week, the most awesome, awe-filled week of the year. Like the Greeks in our text, we want to see Jesus. And we will see Him this week.

Today we see Him riding humbly, yet majestically into Jerusalem.

On Thursday we will see Him graciously handing us bread and wine saying, "This is My Body. This is My blood. Take eat; take drink; for the remission of sins."

On Friday we will see Him arrested, on trial, and then crucified on the cross.

And finally, on Easter Sunday we will see Him rise triumphant from the grave.

Sometimes we'll like what we see. Other times we'll cringe at what we see. But remember, it's not about what we want to see in Jesus, it's about what Jesus wants us to see. He wants us to see that His death means our life, and our new life means death to our old life.

Amen.