

John 12:12-43 (Palm Sunday/Sunday of the Passion—Series B)

“His Glory”

Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield CT

March 28, 2021

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our text today is recorded in the Gospel of John, chapter 12.

The events of the first “Palm Sunday” didn’t make sense to the disciples at the time. They didn’t understand the greater significance of the King fulfilling Zechariah 9, riding into Zion on a young donkey to the shouts of “Save us, we pray. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” But St. John tell us readers, “But when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about Him and had been done to Him” (12:16).

The disciples’ remembering is tied up with Jesus’ *glorification*. The word “glorify” or “glory” occurs 8 times in our text! That’s something we need to pay attention to as we seek to understand what Jesus’ glorification is.

The event in John 12 that triggers the glorification of Jesus is some Greeks who wanted to see Him. These Greeks had gone to Jerusalem to worship at the Feast of the Passover. Perhaps they were proselytes, Gentile converts to Judaism. Maybe they were “God-fearing” Greeks, those who expressed interest in Judaism and believed in the God of Israel but had not fully embraced conversion. Whichever these were, one thing is certain. They wanted to see Jesus. When Philip and Andrew told Jesus that some Greeks were here to see Him, Jesus exclaimed, “The hour has come in order that the Son of Man should be glorified.”

Say what? The moment for Jesus to be glorified is the moment when some Greeks want to see Him? Where's the glory in that? Where's the brilliance, the light, the majesty that we associate with glory? Not here. Jesus is merely seeing some Greeks. How can this be the hour for the Son of Man to be glorified?

It is so, because the hour is more than just this moment of the arrival of these Greeks. This is merely the triggering event, and there's more to come. Jesus' glorification means that He's going to be like a grain of wheat in that the grain—the seed—dies so that it can bear much fruit as it grows anew into a plant. Jesus, in five days' time, will be dead. Can there be any wonder as to why He would say, "Now is my soul troubled." If you knew that in five days you would die a horrible death, you'd be troubled too. Jesus knew that at the end of this week a Roman cross waited for Him. He knew, as He had predicted three times to His disciples, that He would be handed over to the chief priests and scribes, that He would be condemned to death, that He would be spit upon, flogged, and crucified. This He knew would be in order that His death might produce a large crop of those who would receive forgiveness of sins and new, eternal life because of His dying. And this crop would include both Israelites and Greeks, Jews and Gentiles.

You're still waiting for the glory, aren't you? "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified!" Through an agonizing death on a cross? With the shedding of blood? Jesus should have prayed, "Father, save me from this hour. If this is glory, I don't want it!" But He didn't. For this purpose—to suffer and die and rise again—Jesus had come to the hour of His Passion. And it is in His self-sacrifice that God the Father receives glory. "Father," Jesus prayed, "glorify Your name." The Name of God is who He is. The Father receives all glory and

praise through His only Son whose death and resurrection has brought salvation to the whole world. Because the Son's glorification is being lifted up from the earth, drawing all people to Himself. In the words of one commentator, "The strange fact is that Jesus will die not in the normal way, by 'falling to the earth' like a seed . . . , but by being 'lifted up from the earth' like—what? Like a full-grown plant or tree? Or more like a snake upon a pole?"¹ Remember Jesus' words to Nicodemus a few Sundays ago? "And just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so it is necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up, in order that whoever believes might in Him have eternal life. For in this way God loved the world, with the result that He gave the Son—the only one—in order that whoever believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life" (John 3:14-16).

This, dear friends in Christ, is Jesus' glorification. There's no glitz, no flashing lights, no brilliance, or majesty. In fact, "he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed" (Is. 53:2–5 ESV).

¹ J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 701.

And this is a turn off for so many people. A grim verdict is pronounced in verse 43, “They loved the glory of people rather than the glory of God.” Why? Because the glory of people looks like glory. It’s magnificent, flashy, and self-satisfying. The glory of people gets you noticed. It gets you ahead in life, gets you what you want. Human glory is where it’s at, the world tells us. And it is our natural impulse to desire glory for ourselves—success, acclaim, and victory. We look to that which promises answers to all our questions and solutions to every one of our problems, that which gives us triumphs over our competitors, and exhibits the power of God. But what do we get? A God who “came as an outcast baby in a manger who grew up to die by the torture of crucifixion.”²

Jesus’ glorification which brings glory to God the Father is found in a cross whereby “Salvation unto us has come By God’s free grace and favor” (*LSB* 555:1). God reveals His love and His mercy to people who by nature only seek to serve and glorify themselves in the most unexpected way: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is in the death and rising again of Jesus that Satan, the ruler of this world is driven out. With sins forgiven by means of the blood of Christ, there is no more sin that he can accuse you of before your heavenly Father. All your sins have been judged by the Father at the cross. Jesus was found guilty for them and He paid the price of death for you. The judgment rendered to you from the heavenly throne is now one of “not guilty.” Christ was lifted up on the cross and shed His

²Gene Edward Veith Jr and A. Trevor Sutton, *Authentic Christianity* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), 108.

blood to atone for your sins and the sins of the whole world. "It is finished." You are redeemed, forgiven, and saved from eternal death and hell. And that is glorious!

Each time a parent brings their child, or an adult comes to the font, "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," the new life of water and the Spirit is given, forgiveness is granted, and the baptized are united with the death and resurrection of Jesus. And that's glorious!

Each time we come to the Lord's Table and sing "Hosanna," we are saying in faith, "Save us, we pray" with the Holy Body and Precious Blood given and shed for us all. In the Blessed Sacrament, we receive by faith in the eating and the drinking forgiveness of sins, life and salvation through Jesus' cross and resurrection. And that is glorious!

When the Gospel is read and proclaimed, when Absolution is administered by the called and ordained servant of the Word, forgiveness is received because of the death and resurrection of Jesus who commanded His Church to forgive the sins of the repentant in His Name. And those words, "I forgive you all your sins," are glorious!

And so we come to this Holy Week with our Lord—from His entry into Jerusalem on the donkey's colt, to Holy Thursday and His anguish in the Garden, to Golgotha and the bloody crucifixion, and into the tomb of death. The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. In our Lord's Passion, He is glorified as our Savior and King. And we await the light and glory of the Resurrection next Sunday. To God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—be all glory, honor, and praise unto the ages of ages. Amen.