

# The Gospel of John

## Dying to Live

### John 12:20-26

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

This morning we are continuing with John's Gospel.

The Bible gives examples of those who chose to avoid obedience when the price was too high for those who faced the decision:

1. 10 spies who went into Canaan (we looked like grasshoppers)
2. Rich Young Ruler (Jesus looked on him and loved him - sell all that you have)
3. Peter denying knowing Christ (3 times)

They all regretted their decisions.

In Contrast, Bible gives amazing episodes where people were willing to die spiritually and perhaps physically for God.

1. Abraham sacrificing Isaac - "God will provide..."
2. Job - "though He slay me, I will serve Him"
3. Joshua - "Choose you this day whom you will serve..."
4. Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego - "Our God is able to rescue us...but even if..."
5. John the Baptist - "He must increase, and I must decrease"

Each of these people made hard decisions and succeeded where lesser men would have failed. Why was that? Because of a principle found in John 12:26 "The Father honors those who serve..."

#### **All Stand and Read Scripture**

##### **John 12:20-26 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; <sup>21</sup> these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and *began to ask him*, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." <sup>22</sup> Philip *\*came and \*told Andrew; Andrew and Philip \*came and \*told Jesus.* <sup>23</sup> And Jesus *\*answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup> He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. <sup>26</sup> If anyone*

serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

## Prayer

### BODY:

## I. ACCEPTING THE GENTILES.

When Jesus walked this earth, anyone who was not Jewish was considered to be part of the Greek world. That was a general term often used for all foreigners. The Jews were physical descendents of Abraham. They were known as God's people. Everyone else were considered Gentiles or foreigners.

So we come to verse 20. The Jewish leaders had made their final decision to reject Jesus and sought to kill Him. And now we are going to see the initial reception of these Greeks.

### **John 12:20-22 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; <sup>21</sup> these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and *began to ask him*, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." <sup>22</sup> Philip *\*came and \*told Andrew; Andrew and Philip \*came and \*told Jesus.*

They are like the Ethiopian eunuch. Remember him? The Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 who came to worship because he was a proselyte to Judaism. A proselyte was the label given by the Jews to foreigners who adopted the Jewish religion.

It is more than curiosity. They want to find out about Jesus, and so they go to Philip, who in turn goes to Andrew, and the two of them finds Jesus and brings Him to them. Jesus had foretold that there would be Gentiles in the kingdom of heaven.

Remember the centurion who came to Jesus and told Him that one of his servants was paralyzed and needed healing? Jesus offered to go to his house and the centurion said he was not worthy to have Jesus come under his roof. He believed that all Jesus had to do was say the word and his servant would be healed. Then Jesus told him the following:

### **Matthew 8:10-13 (NASB)**

<sup>10</sup> Now when Jesus heard *this*, He marveled and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. <sup>11</sup> **I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven;** <sup>12</sup> but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." <sup>13</sup> And Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed that *very* moment.

Jesus was going to die for **all** mankind and in the following verses He is going to explain how that can happen for each of us.

## II. DYING TO SELF.

### **John 12:23-25 (NASB)**

<sup>23</sup> And Jesus \*answered them, saying, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup> He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.

“And Jesus answered them saying, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” Why would that ignite so much excitement? Because “Son of Man” is a Messianic term found in Daniel 7. It shows how all of the great powers of the world will become corrupt when the Messiah arrives. Then all of a sudden the Son of Man comes with all of His power and dominion and authority, and He crushes all His enemies, and He sets up His kingdom.

### **Daniel 7:13-14 (NASB)**

<sup>13</sup> “I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. <sup>14</sup> “And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

So when they hear that the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified, I can imagine a large cheer from the crowd. This is what they have been waiting for!

But he starts His next statement with “Truly, Truly I say to you.” He has to say, “Truly, truly,” because from the crowds perspective what He is about so say cannot possibly be true. This is too shocking.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” What? There can’t be a kingdom unless I die? There can’t be a kingdom unless I die! I must die in order to become part of your kingdom? The divine timetable has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. But He will not be glorified in earthly conquest, but in substitutionary death.

Jesus did not come into this world to establish an earthly kingdom or earthly empire. He turned their conquest dreams into visions of death, and He did it with an analogy.

As long as a seed remains in the granary, it is preserved by its outside shell. Only when the seed is put in the soil does it begin to decompose and rot away, and when the shell decomposes and rots away, the life inside begins to flourish. It gives life to a huge plant, which produces more seeds and more seeds and on and on it goes.

Grain remains alone bearing no fruit, producing nothing unless it dies. If I don’t die, I remain alone. If Jesus did not die, heaven would be empty of human beings. There would be no one there. Apart from His death, there is no spiritual harvest. This is what He explained to the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus after His resurrection.

### **Luke 24:25-26 (NASB)**

<sup>25</sup> And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?”

His life-giving power is made possible only through His death. He can only put sin away by the sacrifice of Himself. This required His death on the cross. It has been a stumbling block to those who refuse to acknowledge sin in their lives, the seriousness of it, and how impossible it is for us to remove it on our own in order to escape eternal punishment.

We may not think that the cross idea is intellectual or sensible or reasonable, but it is the truth and Jesus says it. I must die. The history of Christianity by the way is the history of one long, miraculous harvest that has all been produced out of one seed dying on Calvary's cross. Only by the sacrifice of Himself could He produce this life in others. Without death, nothing happens. His **example** could not produce a kingdom. His **transfiguration** could not produce a kingdom. His **wisdom** could not produce a kingdom. His **knowledge** could not produce a kingdom. His **kindness** could not produce a kingdom. The spiritual harvest could only be produced through death, and that was the joy that was set before Him and why He endured the cross, **the spiritual harvest that His death would produce!**

### III. SERVING THE SAVIOR.

#### **John 12:26 (NASB)**

***26 If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.***

Notice verse 25, "**He who**". "**He who** loves his life loses it. **He who** hates his life." Then in verse 26, "**If anyone**," and then again toward the end, "**If anyone**." This is the beginning to a new day. "He who" and "If anyone" is not directed only to the Jews. We are no longer talking to Jews. We are no longer talking to Israel. This is a transition. "**He who**" will be the word of the gospel from here on out throughout history. "He who loves his life loses it. He who hates his life keeps it to life eternal." "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me." "Where I am, there my servant will be also." "If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him."

This is a wide open invitation, but I want you to notice this. **It is an invitation to die.** If you love your life, you what? You lose it. If you love the life you have, you lose your life forever.

If you hate the life in this world, if you hate what your life is, full of its sin and self-centeredness and godlessness and hopelessness – but if you hate that and you want to abandon that, you will receive eternal life. It isn't simply believing that Jesus is or that Jesus is who He said He was and did what He did. It is how you look at yourself that makes the difference, and this is why there were so many false converts. They loved the life they had in this world, and they weren't going to abandon it.

Whoever loves this life, loses it. If you keep it now, you will lose it forever. Whoever hates this life in this world, or in other words, whoever sees this world for what it is will keep it to eternal life. This particular principle is all through the gospels, isn't it? If any man will come after Me, let him do what? **(Pause)** Deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. We are to love the kingdom even more than you father, your mother, and even yourself. We are reminded to count the cost. You know all those passages all through our Lord's teaching.

Count the cost, count the cost. It involves hating your life in this world, giving up your life, and following Christ. What is the benefit of this? Eternal life. Where will that be?

Verse 26, “Where I am, there My servant will be also” And where is He? He has ascended into heaven and is at the right hand of the Father in the eternal glories that God has prepared. He has prepared a paradise that is beyond anything we can comprehend. All blessed, all glorious. And one more thing: the Father will honor him. Did you get that? The Father will honor him. What an amazing thing. God honoring me? God forever honoring you? Unimaginable, absolutely incomprehensible. What fool would say no to that to cling to the ashes of this life?

Follow Christ and deny yourself. You hate your life. You abandon your life with all your sin and self-righteousness, all your personal ambitions, goals, and objectives. If need be, face death because the value is so vast that no price would be too high. What is the value? Eternal life, eternal life in the place where Christ is and God spending forever honoring you.

### **Matthew 13:44 (NASB)**

**44 “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid *again*; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.**

One way to interpret this is that we have to die to our self interest; we have to give up focusing on ourselves if we really want to reach others. A mother or father gives up their time, gives up doing the things they like to do in order to spend time with their children helping them grow. The parent, to some extent, dies to self in order to give life to the child. Their life dies like a seed, and then the new life of their child grows. As neighbors and friends, to some degree, we have to give up some of what we want to do and the way we want to spend our time. This is the same approach we should take in our Christian walk with God.

## **CONCLUSION**

So, this is an incredible transition here. We’ve gone from a final rejection by Israel to an initial reception or openness to a small group of Gentiles, which is symbolic of what is to come. The world has begun to go after Him. Salvation has been offered to everyone. His death provides life for all who will believe. Whoever hates this life and longs for all that God has prepared in the life to come can come and follow Christ and My Father will spend forever and ever honoring him.

The concept of “dying to self” expresses the true essence of the Christian life, in which we take up our cross and follow Christ. Dying to self is part of being born again; the old self dies and the new self comes to life. Not only are Christians born again when we come to salvation, but we also continue dying to self by remaining faithful.

Jesus spoke repeatedly to His disciples about taking up their cross (which is an instrument of death) and following Him. He made it clear that if any would follow Him, they must deny themselves, which means giving up their lives—spiritually and even physically, if necessary. This was a prerequisite for being a follower of Christ, who proclaimed that trying to save our earthly lives would result in our losing our lives in the kingdom. But those who would give up their lives for His sake would find eternal life. Jesus even went so far as to say that those who are unwilling to sacrifice their lives for Him *cannot* be His disciples.

Baptism expresses the commitment of the believer to die to the old, sinful way of life and be reborn to a new life in Christ. In Christian baptism, the action of being immersed in the water symbolizes dying and being buried with Christ. The action of coming out of the water pictures Christ's resurrection. Baptism identifies us with Christ in His death and resurrection, portraying symbolically the whole life of the Christian as a dying to self and living for and in Him who died for us.

Paul explains to the Galatians the process of dying to self as one in which he has been "crucified with Christ," and now Paul no longer lives, but Christ lives in him. Paul's old life, with its tendency to sin and to follow the ways of the world, is dead, and the new Paul is the dwelling place of Christ who lives in and through him.

### **Galatians 5:24 (NASB)**

**24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

Where we once pursued selfish pleasures, we now pursue, with equal passion, that which pleases God.

Dying to self is never portrayed in Scripture as something optional in the Christian life. It is the reality of the new birth; no one can come to Christ unless he is willing to see his old life crucified with Christ and begin to live anew in obedience to Him. Death to self is not an option for Christians; it is a choice that leads to eternal life.

**This is the Day.**