

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
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John 12:20-33

The Time Has Come!

- 1. The time for Christ's glory**
- 2. The time for nations' enlightenment**

**Hymns: 111 – 118 – Distribution: 127, 126 –
Closing 129**

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

John 12:20-33 –

²⁰ *Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. 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 I tell you the truth, 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 The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his 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 men to myself." ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.*

A young husband brings home a can of paint with the color he and his wife have picked out for the new nursery at his home. He brings it to the room and bends down to open it up. As he sees the color, it sinks in: They really are going to be having their first baby.

It can happen with car keys. A high school junior or senior asks mom or dad if they can borrow the car for a Friday night. The answer is "Sure," and the keys are tossed over. But as the teen turns to head out the door, for some reason Mom or Dad stare after them and pause for a moment. They think to themselves, "They're going to be gone soon and on their own."

A simple, seemingly insignificant event that leads to a deep, profound thought. Has it ever happened to you? It happened to Jesus. Today we will recount a seemingly simple incident that happened to him in John 12, which evoked deep thoughts and emotions in him. And it may surprise us a little! Today we will study John 12 and see that "**The Time Has Come!**" We will learn what dawned on him on that day so long ago.

1. The time for Christ's glory

John writes, "*Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. 'Sir,' they said, 'we would like to see Jesus.' Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. Jesus replied, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, 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.'*" We see a simple request that day. A group of Greeks asks to see Jesus. They ask Philip, who happens to have a Greek name, if they can meet him.

The response of Christ might surprise us. He didn't just give this request the answer of "Sure" and meet them. It seems it struck him pretty deeply, and he launched into some poetic thoughts. What did he muse about? First of all, seeds. Many of you probably can

relate to the illustration Jesus used here. Pretty soon it will be planting time for gardens in our area. Garden soil will be tilled and raked. Plans will be made for what vegetables to plant. Seeds will be bought.

You know the concept of seeds. You cannot keep the seed that you plant into the ground. If you want a plant to grow that will be producing vegetables for you, you must sacrifice the seed that you are planting. It must give its life for the harvest. The good news is that afterwards a significant harvest can be gathered. You do not receive one bean or pea pod for a seed, but a whole harvest of them.

This is the first thing that Jesus waxes poetic about when the Greeks come to request to meet him. It reminds him that the time is very near when he will be the “seed” giving its life. The time is coming soon when he will make his sacrifice for the sin of the world so that there might be a harvest of people who believe and are saved. The time is coming soon when he must die so that sin is paid for and that many, including you and me, can have salvation in heaven forever. **The time has come!**

Sometimes in reading the gospels, it seems like Jesus’ time is never coming!

- We hear him tell his mother at the occasion of his first miracle when she tells him they have run out of wine, *“Dear woman, why do you involve me? My time has not yet come.”*
- In John 7, when Jesus is up and coming in his ministry, his brothers who did not believe in him told him to go to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles so he could do miracles there and gain a following. Jesus told them, *“The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right.” (John 7)*
- Later in the chapter, after Jesus had gone up to the Feast at the proper time, his enemies tried to seize him but it says that they could not lay a hand on him *“because his time had not yet come.” (John 7)*

His time had not yet come. His time had not yet come. We hear it numerous times. Yet now Jesus pauses and reflects when the Greeks come to him because he realizes... the time has come. The time has come for his glorification. The time has come for his suffering and death. It is Tuesday of Holy Week when this incident with the Greeks occurs. It is Jesus’ last teaching day in his earthly ministry. **The time for glory is near.**

The sad thing we have to realize here is our role in his musings. We have caused his death. Have you ever caused a death? Have you ever slipped up behind the wheel of a car and accidentally taken the life of another? Have you ever let your guard down doing dangerous work and cost someone else their life? Has your lack of attention or seriousness ever resulted in someone else actually losing their life? That would be pretty heavy to live with.

We all must admit this Lent that we have caused a death. Our sin has caused the death of Christ, who as a seed must give up his life so that a harvest can result.

One question you might wonder at as you read Jesus’ perspective on this is about his concept of glory. This is glory? The shame that would be present in his death? The arrest? The mocking? Giving up his spirit? When we teach our Catechism students about Christ’s humiliation and exaltation – how he made himself low in his earthly life and then how he has been exalted – we stress the steps of the creed in those two concepts. In his humiliation we end with how he “suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.” Then his exaltation begins. Yet Jesus teaches us today that there is actually some overlap between his humiliation and exaltation. His suffering and death would surely be part of his humiliation, but he also refers to it as his glorification! How? Certainly not in a human way of thinking. After all, the Jewish nation at his time was looking for a Messiah who would be a political and military champion and defeat the dreaded Romans. The Romans with their gladiator mindset certainly would not look at a crucified man as a glorified person. Glory?

Yet in God's eyes and in God's plan, this would be glory for the Son of God! The entire Old Testament had prophesied about the moment to come. It had predicted that Christ's sacrifice would be the main work that he came to do. The first gospel promise in Genesis 3 to Adam and Eve labeled him as the One who would crush the devil's head. Psalm 22 directly mentions the persecuted, suffering Savior who would give his life. Isaiah 53 describes the One who would be "wounded for our transgression and crushed for our iniquities." This was the culmination of God the Father's plan of salvation! Not only that, but Jesus himself says that by his glory on the cross, *"Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out."* His battle on the cross and the price of hell that he would pay for there was a Revelation-like battle, as pictured in Revelation 12 and Revelation 20 where the devil – that ancient serpent – was thrown down to his judgment! **This is glory!**

It also would happen on the most recognizable symbol for Christianity today. Oh, there are others. There is the fish. There is the triangle. There is the lamb and the book. But no other symbol for Christianity is as common as the cross. Perhaps there are some of you who wear that symbol on your necklace or earrings today, or display it in your homes somewhere. It is the glory of Christ in our day and age as his victory over sin, death, and the devil is remembered there.

As we realize in this reading that the time for glory is near, we can't help but notice Jesus' attitude toward it. Verse 27 said, *"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. Father, glorify your name!"* It is a bit mind-boggling to think that Jesus Christ had trepidations about dying, but think about it. First of all, we must remember that he had a truly human nature along with the divine. As true man Jesus had a natural fear of death, the unnatural intruder. Not only that, but Jesus' death was not going to be like your death or my death (unless Judgment Day comes first). Jesus was going to take on our sin and

guilt and suffer the punishment of hell for them. Jesus was even going to take the weight of the world's sin on himself. Death for a believer now is simply passing through the gates of this world to the next in heaven. But for Christ there was much more involved! The fearsome punishment and price gave Jesus trepidation as he looked ahead to it. Hebrews 5 says, *"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."* We will see more of that in Gethsemane!

Yet Jesus embraced this knowledge and his assignment from his Father. He looked to heaven and said, *"Father, glorify your name!"* Then a voice came from heaven, *"I have glorified it, and will glorify it again."* The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. The Father put his stamp of approval on his Son's resolve.

As we consider these deep implications that crossed our Savior's mind long ago, it certainly closes the door on the question, "Are there other ways to heaven besides Jesus?" Many people ask that question today. Can a person get to heaven without faith in Christ? Not only do we have the Scripture's clear testimony that there are no other ways besides him, we see his deep emotion and resolve because he knows there are no other ways to salvation besides what he will do as he soon is glorified!

2. The time for the nations' enlightenment

Before we leave the account of the Greeks coming to Jesus, we have to focus on one more aspect of the story: The Greeks! We haven't actually talked much about them. The fact is, we don't hear anything more about them in this account. But as deep things dawned on Jesus that day, he took the opportunity to reflect on that as well. After the miraculous voice of God the Father boomed from heaven, Jesus said, *"Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out."*

And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."

When the Greeks came to Philip to ask to see Jesus, he hesitated. Why? We don't know exactly, but it may very well have to do with the times Philip remembered Jesus saying that he had come for the "lost sheep of Israel." Jesus had even said that when he had sent the disciples out on a limited preaching tour. Philip may very well have wondered what exactly to do with this request from the Greeks!

Do you remember the separation that existed between the Jews and the Gentiles at the time of Jesus? God had given Moses all those unique laws for worship, daily life, and civil government that were unlike any other nation's laws. There were even laws concerning uncleanness concerning contact with Gentile homes. There was a "Gentile court" in the Temple area. In the special selection of the Jewish nation as the one to produce the Savior, it was not always clear to them that the Messiah would save all nations. Philip was well aware of all these things as he got that request from the Greeks that day!

Despite the fact that the Israelite nation was front and center in the ancestry of the Messiah, even in the Old Testament it speaks of a special attraction and gathering of the nations. One place that it speaks of this is in Isaiah 60: *"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you... Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn."* In Psalm 2, God says to his Son, *"Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession."* **In the Messianic age, there would be a flocking of the Gentiles to faith as well!**

Jesus knew about these prophecies that would come true after his rejection and crucifixion. There were hints of it in his earthly ministry. The Wise Men had come to worship him from a great distance. Canaanite and Gentile people showed great faith in accounts from the gospels. And Jesus, in this simple request from the Greeks, sees the Gentile nations knocking at the door. Jesus well knew what a gathering of the nations there would be

outside of the 100-mile area of the country he lived in. The time is near when they will come en masse to see him and put their faith in him!

An interesting word that Jesus uses as he described those days is how he would "draw" all people to himself. The Greek word used here literally means to "pull" and "drag!" It also implies that there is a magnetism in the object that is doing the drawing. What a unique concept, as Jesus is lifted up from the earth. People will be drawn to the sight of him then and in the time after that. This is reminiscent of what Jesus had said in the past:

- *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:44)*
- *"I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also."(John 10:16)*

It certainly is Christ who must do the "drawing" when it comes to the hard human hearts that need converting among the nations. It's also fascinating how when we look at history since Jesus said those words and at our world today, we see that the cross still has a magnetizing power in itself. It is an emblem of suffering and shame that continues to draw people and fascinate them today. A favorite hymn says:

**O that old rugged cross, so despised by the world,
Has a wondrous attraction for me;
For the dear Lamb of God left His glory above
To bear it to dark Calvary.**

**So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
And exchange it someday for a crown.**

The cross is a subject that does not evoke neutrality, but rather passionate debate and division.

As we think about Christ drawing the nations to himself, this Lent we should note how he

continues to do this. How does he? Christ uses his believers to bring his Word to new people. He uses the witness of his members to put the cross in front of more people. So today we must ask the question, “Are you being an instrument by which Christ is drawing people?” Are you speaking about the cross to others? Are you inviting others to come hear about the gospel here at your church? You certainly don’t have the power to convert anyone, but you are the tool through which God’s Word can be placed before others!

Today, we need to tell ourselves, “The time has come!” The time has come for us to be an instrument through which the Word comes to the nations. And this time of year, what a perfect time it is for you to invite a friend to come. With next Sunday, Holy Week begins. A festive Palm Sunday service lies ahead. A Good Friday tenebrae service that meaningfully focuses on the death of Christ for our sins. Easter morning festival services, and even breakfast to boot! The time has come – Invite someone to join us with you during this meaningful week coming up!

To help you do that for your friend or for a number of friends, our Outreach Committee has had colorful invitation cards printed that are easy to give to a friend or a neighbor. They have an Easter flavor, along with our worship service schedule. Take some today and make use of these in your inviting friends to the cross of Christ, which “draws” us!

The time is near. Specifically in the Church Year, it is coming next week. The time is near for the glorification of our Savior on the cross, which he profoundly spoke about after a simple request from the Greeks. And the time has come for the gathering of the nations to believe in the name of God’s one and only Son, whom he has sent.

May we be prepared for Holy Week, which begins next week. And may we always cherish the old rugged cross where the dear Savior died! Amen.