

Livin' the Life
Death is the Path to Life
John 12:20-26
November 25, 2018
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We are looking at the life of Jesus and the life he promises in our series in the Gospel of John, *Livin' the Life*. We are in John 12:20-26 today, looking at one of Jesus' last public statements John has given us. Let's take a look at 12:20-26 today and see what Jesus has to say about life and discipleship.

The Setting

This is the pinnacle of Jesus' public ministry. After raising Lazarus from the dead, the crowds were exuberant with Messianic expectations as Jesus entered Jerusalem. Yet in just a few short days this exuberance evaporates as the religious leaders turn the same crowds against him. Among the worshippers at the Passover feast are some Greeks. These are God-fearers (Acts 10:2; 22; 35; 13:16; 25), converts to Judaism, who want to talk to Jesus (20-21).

Jesus' Response

Jesus understands these Greeks coming to him as a sign that the hour has come (remember 7:30, 8:20) for the Son of Man to be glorified (23), for Jesus to go to the cross. They signal a pivotal point when God is shifting his mission being primarily to the Jews to Gentiles. The mission of Christ will be turning to the nations after his death. We are the fruit of that mission; CCC is the fruit of that mission, Plant AK is fulfilling that mission; we are fulfilling that mission as we partner with Plant AK to plant Radiant Matsu in the Matsu Valley and as we partner with and send out missionaries.

Then Jesus explains how his death on the cross glorifies the Son using an agricultural metaphor. 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 (24)! In other words, Jesus dying on the cross bears much fruit, which is the harvest of disciples coming to faith in Christ for eternal life (4:35-38). Everything Jesus said and every miracle he performed pointed to the necessity of the cross. Jesus' death is what makes Christianity unique. Jesus coming as a substitute was the only way to overcome human sin and reconcile us to God. We do not have the resources within us to overcome our own sin problem, which includes both the power and the penalty of sin. Our sin must be overcome by someone outside ourselves. And unless you let Jesus deal with your sin, your life will end in pain and destruction. Jesus died that he might bear much fruit, our eternal life and joy. Then he applies this pattern of death as the path to life to those listening to him.

Cost and Commitment Following Jesus

Speaking to the Greeks and everyone else around him, Jesus clarifies what following him looks like. Discipleship or being a Christian means becoming like Jesus, dying so you may have life. Jesus says, whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life *in this world* will keep it for eternal life (25). Following Jesus is a paradox. Jesus contrasting two ways of living this life. You must hate your life in this world to find your life in the next. You cannot have it both ways (Mat 6:24). You can only give yourself to one way of life. He is talking about an allegiance to one way of life over the other. If we love and live for this life, we will ultimately face eternal destruction. But if we repent or turn away from living for this life only and live for the life Jesus offers, then we receive eternal joy and glory. Jesus never tells us to deny loving life and pursuing our own happiness. It is always a matter of how we are doing it. True and ultimate joy and happiness is found in following Jesus which is a fundamental reorientation of your life around Jesus and not yourself.

Jesus is our pattern. Your death is an exchange for his life in you, leading to eternal life and everlasting joy and glory. Disciples/Christians don't just add Jesus to their lives, Jesus is your life! Jesus didn't die to give you your better life now; he died to rescue you from your sin, so deeply rooted in your heart, only a Savior like Jesus can deliver you from it. This requires a daily repentance from running your own life and letting Jesus run your life. You cannot follow Jesus on your own terms like

the Jews wanted. They wanted a political Messiah so heard Jesus through political eyes, making Israel great again.

Then Jesus restates this principle with a different metaphor, that of a household servant to show what life is discipleship is like. If anyone serves me, he must follow me (death); and where I am, there will my servant be also (glory). If anyone serves me, the Father will honor (vindicate) him (26). Following Jesus means serving him rather than serving this world. It means coming to him in faith for eternal life and follow his teaching in life. Serving Jesus means he is the goal of your life, not your life in this world. Serving Jesus is making him the goal of your life, even if it means sacrifice like giving your life for another. Before Jesus closes his public ministry he is making it clear what it means to follow him. Following Jesus means becoming like him who came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom (Mk 10:45). Following Jesus leads to obeying Jesus which leads to embracing the mission of Jesus, the harvest of seeing others come to faith and follow Jesus. Jesus is challenging his listeners to count the cost and consider their commitment to follow him.

Jesus gives two great and glorious promises to those who follow and serve him. First is that they will be with him in glory. That is, we have his presence in this life and for eternity. We will be with him for eternity with everlasting joy. And secondly, the Father will honor us. That is, God vindicates our life in eternity. The world may think you are foolish for serving Christ, mock you for serving Christ but in the end God the Father will vindicate you for eternity. You cannot follow him like this on your own, you need to turn from the temporary pleasures this world offers and find greater pleasure and joy only Christ can give.

Life Group Questions:

1. Why did Jesus respond to the Greeks coming to him with, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified?
2. When Jesus said if a grain of wheat dies, it bears much fruit, he was talking about his own death. What do you think is the fruit Jesus had in mind?
3. What do you think Jesus means by Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life (25)?
4. How do you struggle with this in your own life?
5. Why is this not a form of works?
6. What is the connection between verse 25 and verse 26?
7. What are the two promises Jesus gives in verse 26 to those who serve him and follow him?
8. How do those promises motivate you to serve and follow Jesus?
9. What is the Holy Spirit showing you from this text and our discussion today?
10. How are you to obey him?