

My Father will Honor the One who Serves Me.

"Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. 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. Very truly I tell you, 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. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. '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!'" 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. Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. 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 people to myself." He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die." (John 12:20-33).

It's not what you would expect. You look forward to a day at the lake and arrive with your swimsuit on and your pool noodles ready only to find out there is an algae bloom and the water looks like, in the words of Gus, "green toothpaste water." You go to look at something you were planning to buy and when you get there whether it is a house or a car or another item, you can't believe it's the same thing you saw in the picture online. They must have done some photoshopping or extreme lighting tricks. The disciples and crowds had praised Jesus, and now as Jesus taught at the temple some Greeks came with a request, *"Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus."* You would think this would make Jesus' day that even Greek, Gentile believers would want to see him, meet him and hear him. And then Jesus launches into a pretty pointed and deep discourse. It's not what you would expect. Today we say, Thank God Jesus isn't what we would expect. And thank God he shows us how to truly have life by hating it in all the right ways. And the wonderful comfort in Jesus promise, *"My Father will Honor the One who Serves Me."*

But wait, did the Greeks ever get a personal audience with Jesus? Does it matter? We and the Greeks got far more in Jesus' reply even if they didn't get a personal audience with him at that moment. *"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, 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 drops a bomb. From the first days of his public ministry at his first miracle at the wedding at Cana, Jesus had been saying, *"My time has not yet come"* (John 2). And now, *"The hour has come"* and it's not what they expected. Jesus lets them know exactly what it entails. You pray every one of those disciple's heads snapped to attention and drank in Jesus' words. Ever the teacher he uses a picture from nature. A seed remains a seed if it sits in dry storage – doing nothing, benefitting no one. You can admire it but it doesn't do anything for you. Jesus was no admirable but unbeneficial seed. He was willing to do what a seed has to do to benefit others. He was willing to die. Put him in the ground. And what will be the effect? When a seed goes in the ground it falls apart. It dies in a sense and from that by the miracle of all the "God-o-matic" scientific processes that God placed into nature, while the sower/farmer waits and watches that seed dies, rises and grows and produces a plant that bears many seeds. Jesus was going to die, willingly die, so you would be produced – your faith, your life eternal, your forgiveness, your salvation.

What does it mean to be his? You are not just for admiring. You are for living. This is not a museum of saints. This is a body of blood-bought believers who are caught in a battle against sin, Satan and the sinful world in which we live. We gather together to hear Jesus' word, encourage one another in following him and praising his name for all he has done for us. Jesus makes it incredibly clear what is at stake and why the struggle is real, *"Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life."* But you don't look like people who *"hate their life,"* but you do. What is Jesus saying? He's not saying be hateful and spiteful of people or of things in this world, or of the blessings he gives you. No we can enjoy life appropriately. He says to be hateful and spiteful of letting anything get in the way of seeing and following Jesus. *"Whoever serves me must follow me."* Any desire in our hearts that is against God or his Word or his commands no matter how much sense it makes in the world or how strong a feeling it is, if it is against Him, we *hate* it. How can we do this? It's hard. Jesus doesn't say it is easy. First we need to know what God says. Read his Word. Study it. Listen to it, not for entertainment's sake as though we are grand

consumers gathered here at a theater to watch and admire and then to judge what we liked and didn't like. Listen to his Word like a person on a sinking cruiseliner getting instructions on how to get that confusing life-saving life jacket on as the water creeps around your ankles. You can bet everyone is paying attention.

Why does Jesus care? *"Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant will also be. My Father will honor the one who serves me."* He has earned your salvation. He is about to reveal how and why. He wants you with him for all eternity. And as you cling to him in this life and prioritize him and keep seeing him, what rewards of his grace – you'll be with him forever in heaven. And the Father, our just creator God, will even *honor* you because of him. Before we think this is our doing, or we get credit or responsibility for it, listen to Jesus.

"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!" 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. Jesus said, *"This voice was for your benefit, not mine. 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 people to myself. He said this to show what kind of death he was going to die."*

We had the sicknesses running through our house the last couple months. The stomach stuff, the fever stuff. We even had swimmer's ear. We were on the road and Gus had had a terrible night of sleep and we stopped at the store to get whatever stuff helps with swimmer's ear. And I went in, found it, decided between the different brands and whether to get name brand or generic, homeopathic or the other stuff, a lot of decisions. And came out with a couple different meds. And I got to the van and opened them up started administering them, and Gus said, "Gross, it tastes bad." And he didn't want to drink it. I didn't say what I was thinking. But I said, "Gus, it doesn't matter what it tastes like. It will help you." Gus drank it willingly. And it helped him.

Do you like the flavor of suffering? Do you like the flavor of complete rejection? Do you like the flavor of someone's rightful wrath? Do you like the flavor of shame? Do you like the flavor of eternal death? No, God keep us from such things! Well, he has. Jesus did not like the flavor of these things but he did not say, *"Father save me from this hour."* Instead he said, *"No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour."* He drank the cup of God's wrath and punishment reserved for us, suffering for our sins – for when we lived for and loved this world and followed our selfish desires, losing sight of him. He suffered eternal hell for you and me. Bottoms up. Nothing was left. He died. Who did it help? You. God's wrath for you and your sin has been drained forever. You are forgiven.

Jesus considered this *"glory."* It's not what you or I would expect. It was to his Father's glory to suffer and die for us because that was his Father's plan. How could we ever say God is not good? Our sinful nature will try to make us doubt God. The devil will tempt with all his might. The world will try to lead us astray by all the different opportunities and pressures. But as God said through Isaiah, *"Do not be afraid."* Look at what God did and does for you. Nothing can truly hurt you or separate you from him. Jesus said, *"Now is the time for judgment on this world."* This world is judged. It's passing away. From the rust on our cars to the graves out by Cash Wise it's passing away. And while the devil still tries to scare and lead astray, he's been defeated by Jesus' cross. He is not in control and it is clearly shown because Jesus died. It wasn't a disaster. It was the redemption price that had to be paid to set you free. And when Jesus came out of that tomb body and soul alive and glorified, it proved it was done. And you are proof of that seed's work!

I don't know if the Greeks got to see him. Maybe they did get, but even if not, I pray their eyes were focused on all he said and all he did because it was for them. And because of the forgiveness won for us we always keep our eyes on him. *Hate your life* in all the right ways. Follow him and his Word even when you don't feel like it. Even if it is unpopular. Even if the world mocks you or ridicules you. Read his Word. Come to hear it and encourage one another regularly. Live what you hear. Do it for his *glory*. He died so we live. He hated his life so he could gain eternal life for you. By his grace, we'll be with him forever, and we'll experience what Jesus promised, *"My Father will honor the one who serves me."* Amen.