

The Glory of the Son of Man
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John 12:23-26
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Please turn with me in your Bibles to the 12th chapter of John, John 12. We're looking again at a section of John 12, Verses 20-36. Last week we looked at Verses 20-24, and this week we are going to overlap a little bit and look particularly at Verses 23-26. There are some things that we need to see and I think that those four verses hold together as a nice paragraph for us to really seek to unpack what the Lord is doing there. The title of the message is 'The Glory of the Son of Man'. We are going to note that in the passage, as well in particular, in the New Testament, and the Bible in general, God's revelation is just packed with paradoxes. It is things that when you see them appear to be opposite of what they really mean. We see this in this passage.

We see it first of all in the way we talked about last week, Greeks are seeking Jesus and they ask if they can see Jesus. Jesus doesn't answer them, it appears at first. Paradoxically, He does answer them. He basically says, "If you really want to see Me, I have to die." We see that this continues through the passage. The glory of the Son of Man is, we're going to see paradoxically seen, the glory, His majesty, His greatness is seen at the greatest point of humiliation. The greatest point of humiliation for the Son of Man is the greatest moment of exaltation. We're going to see that in His death, life flows forth. Another paradox.

Then we're going to see that to experience His glory we also are called to the path of paradox. We're called to lay down our lives so that we might gain them. We are called to lay down our reputation and our honor so that we might be honored by God. We are called to follow Jesus. That is really what it means to be a Christian is to be a follower of Christ. That was Jesus' favorite way to call His disciples, wasn't it? "Follow Me." We're going to see that in this passage, these four verses, Verses 23-26. We are going to see Jesus basically say, "Here is My path to glory. Follow Me on that path." Now let's read Verses 20-36 to get the broader context. This is in the last week of Jesus' life. Verses 12-19, we saw *Palm Sunday*. So we are in Holy Week. It may be Monday, it may be Tuesday. Greeks come seeking Jesus in Verse 20.

John 12:20-36 ~ Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; 21 these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to

*see Jesus.” 22 Philip *came and *told Andrew; Andrew and Philip *came and *told Jesus. 23 And Jesus *answered them, saying, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 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. 25 He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. 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.*

27 “Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came out of heaven: “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” 29 So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, “An angel has spoken to Him.” 30 Jesus answered and said, “This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. 31 Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” 33 But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. 34 The crowd then answered Him, “We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?” 35 So Jesus said to them, “For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. 36 While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.”

These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.

Let’s pray together.

Father, we thank You for the glory of Your Son. We thank You that His glory is made known in this holy word. That the written word reveals to us the living word, and we pray that might happen today in our minds and our hearts for Your glory. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Now, ‘The Glory of the Son of Man’. What we see really, these four verses break down into two paragraphs, and the first point we’re going to gather our thoughts under, the first paragraph really, Verses 23-24, is unveiling His glory.

1) Unveiling His Glory:

Jesus answers, remember they just asked to see Jesus, but for Jesus, the moment when Gentiles come seeking Him, that is non-Jews, Greeks is the word, but it means non-Jews, it means those who are outside the Commonwealth of Israel. A turning point has happened and Jesus knows, the Father has communicated to Him that, “When Greeks come seeking You, now is the time.” So that this simple request for Jesus comes with a great sense of weight and foreboding. Now is the hour for the Son of Man to be glorified. Now is the time.

But it is interesting, he doesn't say, “Now is the time for the Son of Man to die.” Now is the time for the Son of Man to go to the cross.” Now clearly that is what he is intimating, but he says it very differently, doesn't he? “Now is the hour for the Son of Man to be glorified. The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” That is that it is the cross itself that will be the greatest moment of glory for Jesus Christ. It will be the moment when the Son of Man is made known in all of His majesty.

In fact, it is important for us to understand the word ‘glory’. Now the Greek word, ‘doxa’, means ‘to have a proper estimate of, to think rightly about something, and to estimate value’. So the word comes to mean ‘the proper weight of value’. The Old Testament word for glory, as so many words are this way in the New Testament. When you read a New Testament word, it is important to understand the Old Testament background of that word, the Hebrew word, because in the mind of the inspired author, they are thinking in Hebrew, and Hebrew categories. So the word ‘glory’, the glory of God, is not actually the revelation of the intrinsic character of God. I mean, it is not His character itself. What I mean is, God's character is manifested in a number of attributes. He is holy, He is good, He is just, He is loving, He is merciful. All of these are attributes that describe His intrinsic character. He is also omniscient, omnipresent. So all of these things are true to the essential character of God, but glory is not an attribute of God among the others. It is not an attribute at all. Glory is the manifestation of any or all of His attributes. It is the manifestation itself. Glory is what happens when He unveils Himself. That is glory. Glory is Him revealing His goodness, revealing His power. It is the revelation of it that is glory.

The Hebrew word, ‘kabod’, pictures that because the idea of the Hebrew word is ‘weighty, to be burdened down, to be overwrought with weight’. So glory is to have God reveal Himself in such a way that you feel the weight of it. You see that before you, just an inkling of revelation of the intrinsic character of God. One of

His attributes become really clear to you. You see how small, and transient, and weightless you are, and how incredible weighty and valuable He is. That is glory. So when He says, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified,” what He is saying is, “This hour is the hour when the Son of Man, in all of His weightiness, will be realized.” His true value, His full worth is about to be disclosed. Now think about that for a moment. Haven’t we been seeing the glory of the Son of Man as John has presented it throughout this book? In fact, turn with me back to John 2:11. This is right after Jesus does His first sign, possibly the first sign in His ministry. Probably so. The wedding in Cana of Galilee, certainly the first one John records, when He turns the water into wine. Look what John says in Verse 11:

John 2:11 ~ This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

Remember John’s whole point of His Gospel is to tell us about the glory of the Son of God, John 1:14:

John 1:14 ~ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw (we beheld) His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

So here in John 2:11, he is setting out, “I’m going to tell you some authenticating miracles, signs. That is things that certify that He is the genuine one of God, that He is the true Son of God. I want to give you...” and he gives us seven signs in this book. Miracle after miracle, healing after healing. Feeding the 5,000, walking on water, all of these are signs that he gives, culminating with the seventh sign, the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

Now didn’t we behold His glory in all of those signs? Absolutely we did. That is what he just said. “I want you to see His glory. Look at the miracles.” And in the miracles, what you do is you get a proper estimate of the weightiness of this man that is not just a man, He is God. You look at His miracle, and look at Him speak, and call Lazarus from the tomb, and say He is just a man. Who has the power of life in His tongue? I mean, in John’s Gospel, remember in John 7 when the Pharisees and the chief priests send the temple guard to arrest Jesus? Jesus is teaching in the temple at the *Feast of Tabernacles*, and they go to arrest Him, and then they can’t arrest Him. They come back, and the Pharisees, and the chief priests are like, “Where is Jesus? Did you not seize Him?” What did they say? “Never did a man speak like this man speaks.” His enemies said that.

To hear Him speak, how about His disciples when they were with Him on the boat, and He was asleep, remember? In the bough of the boat. A storm is coming up, they are fearing for their lives. They wake Jesus up. “Wake up, wake up! Look what is going on!” He says, “Oh you of little faith,” and then He speaks a word, “Peace be still,” and immediately the sea is calm. What do they say? “What manner of man is this that even the wind and the waves obey Him?” When you see that you see glory. When you see Him touch the leper, when you see Him heal the blind man, you see glory. When you hear Him teach with authority as the crowds continually said, “We’ve never heard anyone like this. He teaches as one having authority.” You see glory. And when He called Lazarus from the tomb, you certainly see glory. Jesus is saying here, in John 12, is it relatively speaking, “Now, is when you really see My glory.” This is the message of all of the Gospel-writers, that the glory of the Son of God, the glory of the Son of Man is made known supremely in the cross. The true majesty of His worth, the true wonder of His person, the true glory of His character is demonstrated at Calvary as nowhere else. You see it there clearer, with greater brilliance than anywhere else.

So look to the cross if you want to see the glory of the Son of God. Now is the hour. The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. This is why the Gospel-writers spend most of their time on the passion, that is the death of Christ, the last week. John himself, if you look at his structure of his Gospel, he is the most notable this way, but all of them are this way. Like Matthew spends 21 chapters, I can’t remember exactly. I meant to look this up and I forgot, but it is like 21, we’re going to roughly estimate 21 out of 28 on the first 30 years of Jesus’ life, and the last eight chapters are on His last week. Now think about that. Luke, the same way. Mark, the same way. And then John, you come to John, and the first 11 chapters cover Jesus’ life and ministry up until the last week. Chapter 12 covers the last week, and Chapters 13-21, nine chapters, cover the last 24 hours. Nine chapters on 24 hours.

Some Bible commentator pointed this out years ago that the Gospels are basically passion narratives. They are basically narratives of the cross with long introductions. That’s why Paul says, “We preach Christ and Him crucified.” The cross is everything. “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ,” Galatians 6:14. And the Christian is the one who understands this is the place of glory, and that is a paradox, isn’t it? I mean the cross is an instrument of execution, and we wear it around our necks, we put it in our church buildings, on top of our buildings, we glory in the cross. We glory in an instrument of death. And not just in an instrument of death, but an instrument exceedingly great brutality.

The cross was basically developed over the centuries by the great world powers, tyrants who wanted to inflict pain upon the people they conquered, and to instill fear so that they would not revolt. The Persians developed the first elements of crucifixion, impaling people alive on pieces of wood. The Greeks took it a step further and the Romans perfected it. The Romans made it so that a man would die in the most slow and agonizing way possible. That he would feel the weight of his flesh tearing with every breath because of the nature of our lives, we gasp, we struggle to stay alive, and so that itself would add to the pain. Hour upon hour of agony, that is what the cross was created to be, and God in His providence, in His sovereignty, allowed those things to happen. Evil is at work, Satan is at work, the wickedness of men is at work, and wanting to devise ways to inflict cruelty and punishment, and yet God is ordering all of that because that is the way His Son must die.

So Jesus experiences the incredible agony, and the incredible shame of being hung upon a tree. Cursed, and more than that, He experiences the incredible agony of being covered in our sin. We read earlier, “He who knew no sin became sin for us.” On the cross, our sins are credited to Him, imputed to Him, and the pollution, and the guilt, and then the wrath of God against sin, poured out upon Jesus Christ for every sin of every person who would ever believe. The weight of that upon the Son of Man. That horrible moment is the moment where His glory is most supremely revealed, and that is why we glory in the cross, because we glory that God would come into the world and take our sins away. This was the only way that it could be done where God could remain just, and holy, and save sinners in a just and holy way. Because our sin is so great that God just can’t wink at it and pardon it, our sins must be punished. Every sin that you or I have ever committed must be fully punished. Every time we’ve lost our temper, every time we’ve envied the possessions of another, every time we’ve lusted for something that was not rightly ours before God. Anytime we lust like that anyway it is sin, it is wicked. Every one of those must be paid for.

James tells us in James 2:10, that if you kept the law, and offended only in one point, you’d be guilty of all the law. That is that God can only accept a person with a perfectly clean record. We are stained up to the skies. So Jesus had to come into the world to bear all of the sin of everyone that ever believed, and He did. So we have the glory of His love, the glory of God’s mercy, the glory of His kindness is set supremely on display in the cross, and the glory of His holiness. So look to the cross if you want to see the glory of God. This is why we must never stop looking at the cross. Every day, look at the cross. Look at the cross to humble our pride.

How easy it is for us to start thinking highly of ourselves, isn't it? We come into this world thinking highly of ourselves. I mean, think about when you are a child, a baby, you think very highly of yourself. You bring home that little baby from the hospital and you say, "You wicked sinner. All you think about is yourself 24/7." John Street says, "They are vipers in diapers," but there is the image of God as well. But that child only cares about itself. "I'm thinking about Mom. Mom needs rest tonight. She looked tired earlier. I'm going to minister to her by sitting here and being hungry for another hour. I know I need to be changed, but I think she needs some more time." No, it is completely about self, and it stays that way, we just get a little more clever in the way we manifest it. We realize you can't just cry when you want something. You have to learn how to play the game, and so then you work to play the game so that it remains about self. That in itself is the height of wickedness because really we are created for God. We belong to Him, He gives us our life breath, He formed us, we owe Him everything that we are, and it is right when He says, "The greatest commandment is you should love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might." Every moment should be lived out in love of God. "Lord, what do You want? How can I serve You? I love You. I want to please You." That is how we ought to live, but we live for ourselves. We are usurpers of His throne, and that is why, when Jesus came into the world, people didn't love Him. They hated Him because they saw the one who wanted to take away our usurped authority. Intrinsicly they know, "There is the Son of God."

Remember He makes that clear in His parable of the tenants of the vineyard, that basically the Jews, the Chief Priests, the reason they killed Him was they knew who He was. Remember that parable Jesus tells in the last week of His life. He says the tenants of the vineyard wouldn't give the produce of the land to the landowner, and so the landowner sent servants to get the produce of the land to say, "Where is the honor that I deserve?" and they beat up one, they killed another, and it happened again and again. And finally he says, "I'll send my son. Surely they will respect him," and when the son comes, because they know he is the heir, they say, "Let us kill him and the vineyard will belong to us." That's why the Jews killed Him, and that's why you and I had we been there, would have done the same thing. And that is the ugliness and the exceeding sinfulness of sin. And the glory of the Son of Man is that He comes and He's willing to take away all of that by bearing that in His own body on the cross and experiencing the wrath that that rightly understood deserves. Sin isn't just where to err is human. No, sin is the highest form of treason. It's cosmic treason, and so we see in the cross the glory, the unveiling of the glory of the Son of Man.

Now, secondly what I want us to see is we also see—in that second part of this first point of *Unveiling His Glory*, in Verse 24, He unpacks for us one piece of the glory of the cross by using a metaphor.

John 12:24 ~ 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.

He uses a very common metaphor in an agrarian society. They knew what it was to make bread from the grains of wheat, to plow their gardens and to sow their fields, and so He says, “If you have a grain of wheat, the grain of wheat itself has life in itself.” I mean, if you think about that, isn’t that amazing how God’s made things? The acorn that falls from the oak tree has life in itself so that if a squirrel, as they often do, goes and buries that acorn and then forgets where he buried it, I guess, or he buries so many of them that he doesn’t even go back to it, that acorn becomes an oak tree. Come back in 150 years and you may have a giant oak tree, and at one point it was a tiny little acorn.

Well, wheat’s the same way. It has seeds in the kernel of the wheat, and so Jesus says that the grain of wheat has life in it, but if it stays alive, if it doesn’t fall to the earth and die, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit. When it falls to the earth, and the kernel is opened, and the seeds are scattered to the wind, and gather some dust around them, and rain comes, then suddenly you have a wheat field. He says that’s what the Son of Man’s death is like. The Son of Man is the only one who has life in Himself. He’s basically one stalk of wheat walking in a barrenness, a desert. Everyone around Him is lifeless, lifeless, lifeless. The Son of Man has life, and the only way that anyone else can come to have life is if He dies, and in His death, a chain reaction of life happens. Such is the glory of this one Man, that when He died, He brought many sons to glory in His death.

So the unveiling of His glory is what we see in verses 23 and 24, and then to follow the flow of thought, we see that what He tells us, He moves from His own experience, and we’re going to see He’s going to go back to it in a moment. He’s going to pray, “Now my soul has become troubled,” right after this next paragraph, which really follows along what He’s been saying.

John 12:23 ~ “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 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.

Verse 27 really follows more logically Verse 24:

John 12:27 ~ “Now My soul has become troubled;...”

He’s thinking about His own experience. “Now is the hour for Me to die, to be glorified, and if I die, I’m going to bear much fruit, but my heart has become troubled.” But there’s a paragraph inserted. In Jesus’ flow of thought, He moves from Himself to His listeners, and He basically shows us that what is true of Him is also true of His followers in a very interesting and related way, that His own path is a paradigm, is a pattern, that if you’re to follow Christ, if you’re to be a true follower of Jesus Christ, if you’re really going to be a Christian, you must follow in His footsteps like this. This really makes clear that salvation, Lordship salvation, is right and biblical, and is the only way to understand salvation, because whenever Jesus talks about salvation, this is the kind of thing He says. He doesn’t envision that you can be saved by merely just praying a prayer, and I mean you can be saved simply by praying a prayer, but there has to be a transaction of your heart where you give yourself to Christ. That’s why Romans 10:9 says that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. There has to be an acknowledgment of Him as Lord. Look at how He unpacks this. Verses 25 and 26, the second point is:

2) Experiencing His Glory:

Unveiling His Glory was verses 23 and 24, and now we’ll look at *Experiencing His Glory* in verses 25 and 26. The flow of thought is as He thinks about Himself that He must die to bring forth life, He basically says, “Now that’s true of you as well. The path to life for you is through the valley of the shadow of death,” and not really just the shadow of death but the valley of death itself.

John 12:25-26 ~ He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. 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.

There are two sub-points under this second point *Experiencing His Glory*, and here are the next two paradoxes. The same way that Jesus’ greatest glory was revealed in His greatest moment of humbling humiliation, in the same way that His death gives life, the paradox now is that verse 25, if you’re going to be a true follower of Christ, you must lay down your life. You must be willing to lose it, for if you don’t, you will certainly forever lose it. But if you lay it down, you will gain it.

John 12:25 ~ He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.

The word *life* here translated twice in verse 25, you may have a little footnote in your verse there. The NASB that I'm reading does. It tells you that the word *life* is actually the word *soul*. It's the word ψυχή (psychē). He who loves his soul loses it, and he who hates his soul in this world will keep it to life eternal. Soul is a word that's used often for life, a form of metonymy where you use one word for another. And the life of the soul, the word actually originally comes in the Hebrew and the Greek from the word to breathe, and it means the soul is the animating force in a person. You have body and you have soul. When soul and body are together, you have life. And it's also when you look at the way soul is used in the Scriptures, it's the seed of the senses. It's the seed of the thinking. It's the seed of feeling. It's the seed of living, so that He says, "He who loves his life, he who is loving his life, his experience, his consciousness of this world, he who wants that and wants his own experience of that will lose it, but he who's willing to surrender his life in this world and no longer live for himself, he will gain it unto eternal life.

This is the paradox that when you seek your own experience, when you seek to live your life your own way for your own goals, for your own pleasures, when you remain on the throne of your life, you will forever experience the destruction of your life. But if you are willing to surrender your life and you are willing to hate your life, He says, you will have it unto life eternal. What does He mean by hate your life? He who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. This is very similar to what He says in Luke 14:26. Jesus says, "If any man would come after Me, he must hate his father and mother, or he is not worthy to be My disciple." And even his own life, He says. You have to hate your father and mother to be the disciple of Jesus Christ.

Well, obviously we know that He is not meaning that we're to literally hate them, because He tells us in other places that we're to take care of our parents. We're to honor our parents. I mean, the fifth commandment is: Honor your father and your mother. The first commandment on the horizontal is: Honor your parents. It's before murder. Honor your parents. So we're to love and honor our parents. What does that hate mean? It means, relatively speaking, that our love for God is so great that it appears, when you think about if any man does not hate his father and mother, He's not worthy to be My disciple, Jesus is saying relatively speaking, "If you don't love Me so much more than you love your parents, you're not worthy of Me." In fact, in that is implicitly a claim to deity. He's basically claiming the rights of Deuteronomy 6:5 which I mentioned a little earlier, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might." Jesus says, "Love Me like that, and if you don't, you're not worthy of Me."

Now, when He says this then, “Hate your life,” what does He mean? He means hate your life relatively. Love it less than what? Love it less than the life to come. He’s saying that the only person who is going to have life is the one who learns to hate his life, that is, love his life less in this world than he does the life in the world to come, that a Christian is the person who has learned that it’s all about eternity, and that we no longer are laying up for ourselves treasures on earth. We’re laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven. Like Paul says in Philippians 3, we understand that our citizenship is in heaven from which we await a Savior. We’re waiting eagerly for a Savior to come from heaven. We want to go there.

One of the things that is clear as you read through the Scriptures, that God is teaching from the very beginning, is that the people who have saving faith are people who are increasingly or who become at some point in time when they’re saved, heavenly minded, and they work at and labor at becoming increasingly heavenly minded. God’s been teaching that from the very beginning. I love how the teachings of Scripture flow from Genesis to Revelation. The Lord baby talks with us. He teaches us. Calvin says He baby talks with us like you baby talk with your child. You come down to their level and you use words that they use so that they can understand. God does that with us.

Think of how He unveils what it means to be a follower of God in the life of Abraham. Think about why God told Abraham when he was 75, “Go to the land that I will show you. I’m going to give you this land.” That’s pretty amazing. Abraham goes to the land, and I would think he’s ready to say, “Okay, everybody out. I’m here. The Lord told me this land is mine,” but that’s not what happened. He lives to be like 165. I can’t remember exactly, but over 150, so 75 to 90 years longer, and do you know how much of the land he owns? He owns one cave in a field to bury Sarah and his loved ones, and that’s where he ends up being buried.

He hands it down to Isaac. He says, “Isaac, let me tell you something. God told me this land belongs to me and my offspring, so this land belongs to you.” So Isaac lives to a ripe old age, and do you know how much he owns of the land? He owns a cave, and he tells his son Jacob, “Jacob, this land belongs to you now.” How much does Jacob own? He owns the same cave that his grandfather owned. They lived as strangers and aliens in the land of Canaan. Why did God do that? Did he get his timing off? Was God’s calendar off? “I meant to not tell you until later, but the Canaanites are still there. We’re going to wait a little bit. Sorry about that.” Of course not.

The Lord did that so that He could teach them what the author of Hebrews says in Hebrews 11, that faith, what is faith? Faith is the evidence of things hoped for, the assurance of things not seen. Saving faith is being assured of what you don't see, and wanting that. And in Hebrews 11, it says that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (starting with Abraham), they were looking for a city whose builder and maker is God, by living in the land and wondering, "This is our land, but why don't we own it?" Remember how Isaac had to move from time to time? He's tried to dig a well there in chapter 26 or 27. He digs a well and the Canaanites come in and take it away from him. He digs another well and they come and take it away from him. He digs another well and they take it away from him. He finally digs a well and they let him keep it, and he names it.

Why does that stuff happen? It happened so that he could learn this world is not your home. Don't get too comfortable here, and the patriarchs began to see Canaan was a type of heaven. We can never really be at home with God as long as we're in this world, because this world, though it was originally beautiful and there's still incredible evidences of God's glory in this world, it is marred, it is diseased, it is decaying, it is in bondage to death, and until it is made new, we ought to want to escape, in God's time, in His way, but we are going to a better place, and we don't mean that just in the shallow way that unbelievers say, "He's in a better place now," but so often they say that when that's the farthest thing from the truth. It's only true of the Christian, the one who's been born again. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

When we leave this world, we go into the presence of Him who made the good things in this world, and we need to cultivate what He's saying here. The Christian is the one who is willing to lose his life. That's salvation. You must be willing to lose your life. Lord, I want Jesus more than I want anything else. Then the rest of your Christian life is trying to live that out and watching the flesh come back and fight, and realizing how easy it is to love the things of this world, isn't it? Especially in America, but it's wonderful how God has so many ways that He reminds us we're not home. There are good things that we do. We're supposed to take dominion over the earth, right? And so we're to take dominion. That means we tend to our yards, we clean our houses, decorating, that's all good, but isn't it funny how there's always something else to do? You get everything done and then something breaks immediately. You get everything there and you're like, "Finally. I just want to sit back, drink a cup of coffee, and look and admire everything. That's fixed. That's no longer askew anymore. The stain is repaired," and what happens? Your hot water heater bursts.

Why? It's because the Lord wants us to remember that in this world, moth and rust corrupt, and thieves break in and steal. And so when that happens, one of the things that we can do to learn to cultivate a love of the next life is when bad things happen, remember that and anticipate glory. It won't always be like this. The reason that it frustrates me so much is I was created for a perfect world, but this world can't be perfect. Praise God, He's taking me to a perfect world. So when bad things happen, when our bodies break down, we don't have to be like the world that strives to stay young. There's nothing wrong with tending to ourselves a little bit. I'm not saying that, but we're not invested in this world. Our citizenship is in heaven, and so we don't strive for it the way the unbeliever does, because it's all he has. We have so much more waiting for us.

One of the challenges of living, I think, in America and living in this day is that we do have so many blessings. Things are so easy, relatively speaking. I mean, years ago you had to work all day just to eat supper. You had to kill the animal, skin the animal, prepare the animal. It's hard to build a fire. Now we just drive through. All that's been done. And you think about the fact that we have so much to be grateful for. We're not as grateful as we should be, but I think that the key, what we have to learn to do is learn to do what the passage says that Ted read at the beginning of the service. Psalm 34:8 says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." How do you deal with the blessings of God when the Lord's really given you blessings? Not just material blessings, but sometimes spiritual blessings, when things are well with you, how are you to respond to that? Because He blesses His people like that at times. What are you to do?

You're to taste and see that the Lord is good. That is that when you receive a blessing from God, when you receive something wonderful from God, you enjoy it in His presence and you praise Him for it, and you remember this: If this is this good now, if this is this wonderful now, what will glory be like? If God has made food to taste this good in this world, what must it be like to sit down at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb? If God has made communion with other believers to be so wonderful at moments when we share our hearts, and we laugh, and we enjoy each other, what must it be like to be in the presence of our Holy Father, washed in robes of righteousness, never to sin again, never to hurt anyone again, to be holy and blameless before Him and to hear the joy of His laughter? So we must cultivate a love and a longing for the next life, and the Christian is the person who uses adversity to do that as well as blessing.

We have to help each other because we forget. We're sheep. We have to go remind each other, "Hey, why are you so upset about that ballgame result?" "That's right." It's okay in its place, but this world is passing away. What's happening with the Kingdom right now? So that's the paradox. You lay down your life so that you gain it, and then secondly, the second paradox to experience His glory is you lay down your reputation. You lay down your honor. He says:

John 12:26 ~ 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.

When He says that, He uses the word διακονέω (diakoneō). We get our word deacon from this. It means to serve like to wait tables. Basically what He's saying is, "Listen, if you're going to be a follower of Christ, you're going to be a servant. In this world, you are called to serve," and you're called to serve in eternity too. But in this world, it's going to be even more humbling to you to be a servant. Think about a servant. A servant is someone who waits on another. You see how He's killing our will. We want everything that we want when we want it, but God says, "No, serve Me. It's not about what you want. It's about what I want."

The Christian is the person who realizes, "I'm going to lay down my honor and my reputation and what I want, and I'm going to take upon myself the mantle of a servant, and I'm going to do what He wants. I'm going to rejoice when no one notices me and they don't appreciate me. I'm going to learn that's the way we can cultivate this kind of attitude as well." When no one thanks or when people malign us, not that we rejoice in the sin but we rejoice that God's reminding us, "I'm just a lowly servant. I'm of no reputation. All I'm concerned about is the name of Christ," and when we do that, we find out we're living exactly how Jesus lived. Isn't that amazing? This is the glory of the Son of Man. The Son of Man, what did He say in Matthew 20:28?

Matthew 20:28 ~ ... Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve,...

Isn't that astonishing if you stop and think about it? He should be served. Every whim, every desire should be the focus of everyone on the earth, when He came, they should have been attending to Him, but He did not come to be served. He came instead to serve. What kind of God, what amazing character, God who comes humbly to serve, and then He calls everyone who will believe, "Follow in My path." And if you do, if you choose to humble yourself to be named among the outcasts, the Christians, the religious zealots, whatever people will refer to you as

and think that you don't have any sense because you live your life differently, living your life for heaven, if you're willing to be dishonored among men, listen to this what He says in Verse 26 at the end:

John 12:26 ~ ... if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

God on the throne, the majestic glory, will honor you if you will serve. Take up the mantle of lowliness and follow your glorious Savior along His lowly path, and when you get there, the Father will greatly honor you. That's almost too wonderful to even imagine, isn't it? That God, the God of glory, will look at you, you individually, and He will honor you. He will value you. He will bless you. He will speak of you and your worth. The glory of this passage, the calling is a calling to lose your life, to be willing that whatever God brings I'm going to praise Him, so that if He takes away blessings, it's just helping me to remember I belong to another world. If He gives me blessings, it's just for me to taste a little bit, a drip, of what will be the ocean when I get there, and to serve Him means I lay down my honor and I work to lift up Christ and to lift up my brothers and sisters, and to honor them, and when I get there, He'll honor me. But it's hard. It's hard to do these things.

Yes it is, but what you have to do, the real key to doing it is not just to understand the principle I need to do it, but it's to look at the One who did it so well. It's to keep your eyes on Christ. That's exactly what He's saying here. Jesus says, "Look, follow Me," and the word follow means to attend to. It actually means to be engaged with. So if you're going to follow Him along this path, what you've got to do is keep attending to Him. If you were driving in your car with somebody, this doesn't happen that often, though recently I had the experience where I was going behind a guy, and rather than put it into my cell phone to have it tell me turn right, I just was following him, and I got separated by a couple of cars. You know how it is. Remember when we used to do this? You young people have no idea about this, but we used to have to do this all the time. *Follow me*. So you have to keep your eye on them. "Oh no, the red light got me but it didn't get him."

Jesus says, "The way that you're to do this is you attend to Me," that is, you keep looking at Jesus. You keep your eyes on Him. You don't look just at yourself and your circumstances. You're going to invariably look at your circumstances, and you're going to find yourself looking at your pain, looking at the blessing, but what you keep doing is looking from that to Christ. *I want to follow You*. And as you keep looking at Him, what you see in Him is the ultimate example of One who hated His life in this world. Relatively speaking, He didn't love His life in this

world. He longed for the day when He was going back to the Father. For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross. He was looking to the joy that was set before Him continually. That's His focus, His target, is eternity. It's eternity, so keep looking at Jesus. And then if you want to be a servant, how can you be a better servant than to look at Him who was so great, so worthy of praise, and yet He lowered Himself?

As Paul says in Philippians 2, He took upon Himself the form of a slave, a servant, and became obedient to the point of death. He made Himself of no reputation. He didn't regard equality with God a thing to be held onto, but He let go of that honor as God and He took upon Himself not only the form of a man, the form of a slave, the lowliest man, the Son of Man, and in doing that, took the lowliest position. We're going to see in the next chapter He's going to be washing His disciples' feet, because that was the way He lived, and if *He* could do that, how can I as a follower of Christ not do the same? Keep your eyes on Him. That's what we read earlier. 2 Corinthians 5 says that the love of Christ constrains us. You look at the love of Jesus and it has a hold on you. It compels you.

What does He say? The love of Christ constrains us, that if one died for all, if He died for all, then we who live are no longer to live for ourselves. You keep looking at Him and His love, and the desire for reputation dies. The desire for honor dies. The desire to live your life for you, your way, in your time, for your goals, it dies. Just keep looking at Jesus, because the more you look at Him, the more you become like Him, and the more content and joyful you become, and the more you anticipate like Paul says in Philippians 3:20, "Our citizenship is in heaven from which we eagerly await a Savior." You say, "I'm not eager in wanting that." We all struggle with that. How do you get more eager? You keep looking at Jesus and you keep realizing this is the path of life. May we say with John in Revelation more and more from our hearts, "Maranatha! Even so, come Lord Jesus."

Let's pray together...

Father, we marvel at the glory that You possess—Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, infinite in power, and wisdom, and majesty, and yet willing to be humble and approachable, even lowly. We who were conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity with the desire to be first, God, kill that. Let us continually rejoice in denying ourselves and lifting up such a worthy Savior.

We pray for those that are here today who need to deny themselves in a saving way today to repent, to turn from living life for their purposes. May they turn to Christ and receive in Him the forgiveness of sins and new life, and a new reason to live. May today be the day of salvation. We pray that all of us might eagerly await and anticipate a Savior who is coming soon. We pray in His Name, Amen.

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