

# Fifth Sunday of Lent

Some Greeks who had come to worship at the Passover Feast came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we would like to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be. The Father will honor whoever serves me.

"I am troubled now. Yet what should I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But it was for this purpose that 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 there heard it and said it was thunder; but others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come for my sake but for yours. Now is the time of judgment on this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself." He said this indicating the kind of death he would die.

Jn 12:20-33

What is glory? What do I know about glory? My imagination quickly brings a kaleidoscope of images: kings in their splendor, huge castles, sprawling empires, great armies marching across the map, caravans of riches connecting opulent cities. Somebody is on the top of all this. Somebody who is glorious because he is powerful. Then there is the glory of history: great events, powerful ideas remembered by cultures and generations, taught in schools, repeated in conversations. This is what the glory of this world looks like: power and memory.

Jesus does not fit those images. The voice from heaven, the voice of the Father, declares his glory. That glory seems to be very different than what I have imagined. What is it? As a hint, or maybe as an introduction to his world, Jesus offers the story of a grain. "Unless the grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat." He is describing his future glory, and that glory is defined by the gift of self. The gift must be total; this gift must be

complete. That's why he uses the image of the grain which has to die to bring fruit. Nothing can be left unchanged. That gift must be thorough, to the very last movement of my heart.

Is Jesus talking about self-destruction? Is it some sort of alienation from myself? Will there be anything left for me? This is the moment when I realize the difference between the Infinite God and the limited and broken human being. Holy, almighty, all-knowing God does not need more power, more armies, or more riches. He doesn't need more wisdom or influence. He's not worried about being forgotten. He already has it all. He already has it in the highest possible measure. In the world of such holiness, of such pure existence, there is only one thing that he wants: He wants to share his happiness; he wants to give Himself. This desire to give himself becomes the very definition of his being; we call it Love.

The moment we hear the voice of the Father over Jesus, who is preparing the apostles for the mystery of the Cross, we are being prepared for the greatest spectacle that human eyes can see: the unified and perfect love of the Father and the Son that will bring us back to life. This complete gift will reverse the logic of our broken world and will submerge us into the world of the Father's love. The grain that dies truly brings fruit. The love that forgets itself truly reveals the most powerful identity. The One who freely gave his life and died on the cross will be raised by the love of the Father: Our eyes will see the glory of God.

"The glory of God is man fully alive." Saint Irenaeus.