

The Coming of Jesus' Hour

March 21st/22nd, 2010 (Abbreviated from Sophia Institute Press Lesson)

In the Gospel of John, Jesus reminds us once again that to be His follower means following Him to the Cross. In this lesson, we will reflect on how being a faithful Christian can be hard, and contemplate how we can take up our own crosses and follow Jesus.

Let us read the passage from St. John's gospel:

A Reading from the Gospel of John 12:20-33:

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.

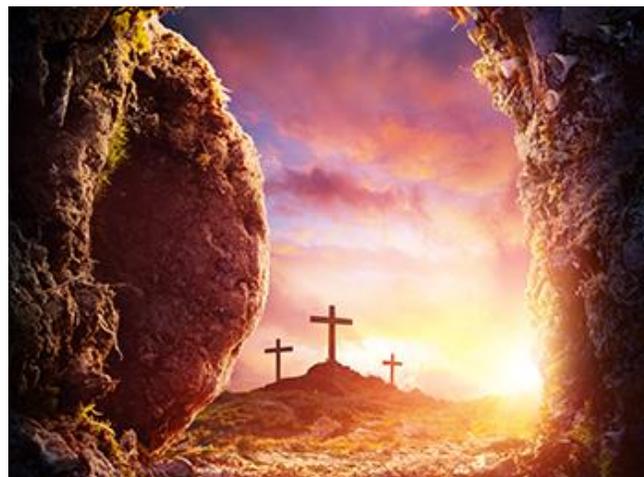
"I am troubled now. Yet what should I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it and will glorify it again." The crowd there heard it and said it was thunder; but others said, "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.

Now, let's take some time to focus and reflect on what Jesus is saying to us in this Gospel story. If you need to, read the story again slowly, and then answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper:

1. Jesus says to His disciples, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." What do you think Jesus is speaking of?
2. Jesus uses the image of wheat to make an analogy. What analogy does He make and what do you think it means?
3. What does the voice of God the Father say in this Gospel reading? What do you think this means?
4. We have learned during this Lenten journey that Lent is a time for reflecting in a special way on the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ, and for doing penance for our sins. It is also a time for a spiritual "spring cleaning," when we renew our relationship with God. We are called to give alms, to pray, and to fast. How do you think the message of Lent is present in this Gospel?
5. What is this Gospel passage calling us to in our own lives? What promises does this Gospel make if we live what it teaches?



When Jesus is speaking of “His hour” that is to come, He is talking about the suffering which He is preparing to endure for us, His Crucifixion and Death on the Cross. Jesus tries to explain to his friends, the disciples, why it is important for Him to suffer and die by using the image of a seed of grain, which must die in order to bring forth fruit. The grain of wheat is the seed from which a new wheat plant will grow. It is important to know that when a seed is buried in the ground, it ‘dies’ or stops being a seed, in order that it can become the plant it is supposed to be. The ‘dead seed’ no longer exists and in its place is the new plant that bears fruit. Jesus is trying to teach His friends that we need to be like the wheat. If we want to see fruit in our lives, that is to be able to do good works in accord with God’s will and be happy, we too have to deny ourselves and be willing to ‘die’. Our ‘old self’ must pass away with all of the things we used to do and be replaced with a new person in Christ. When we think about this teaching we can also be reminded of our Baptism, when we were buried in the waters of Baptism, which symbolizes our death to the world and the beginning of our new life in Christ, as sons and daughters of God the Father.



This Lenten Season is a time for us to bury our ‘seed’ and to die to ourselves through acts of prayer fasting and alms giving. In a special way we are called to live like Jesus and imitate Him in life of sacrifice, self-denial, and love of God and neighbor. If we allow ourselves to stay tied up to things here on earth we will not be able to receive God’s love and living the life He calls us to live, that a following Jesus and serving Him.

Take Up Your Cross

Very soon we will be celebrating Palm Sunday, which is the beginning of the holiest week of the liturgical year – **Triduum**. During Triduum we prayerfully enter into Christ’s suffering and Death on the Cross before His victorious Resurrection on Easter Sunday. Jesus tells us that the time for His suffering and Death is near. He told us of His coming Passion numerous times in the Gospels. He told us that following Him meant that we must also follow Him to the Cross. He told us plainly that to be His disciple means that we too will suffer and be persecuted, and that we will have to carry our own crosses.

Jesus knew that the path to Easter Sunday would be hard. Remember, Jesus is fully God and fully human. He suffered greatly – physically and emotionally. He knows what it is like to be you and me – even in our suffering. And He knows that following Him and being a faithful Christian is hard too. But He also promised us that despite the challenges we would face as Christians, we will find our reward in Heaven. He promised us eternal life with God in Heaven. He promised us His glory. And then, He proved all of His promises to us by rising from the dead.

Jesus challenged all of us when He said, “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.” (Luke 9:23-24). Being a disciple of Jesus means carrying our own cross and following in His footsteps.

Think about the challenge that Jesus offers to you. Remember that He has gone before you and has experienced everything that we experience, except sin. Reflect on the following questions and write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What are three ways that it can be hard to be a follower of Jesus?

2. What are two specific things that you can do this week to take up your own cross and follow Jesus?

Follow Jesus

Jesus said, “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23).

Our cross is not like Jesus’. It is not big and wooden. It is not something we carry on our shoulders. Our crosses are the hard things we have to face in our lives. Some people might be very sick. Some people might be lonely and need friends. Other people are poor or homeless. Some people have a hard time in school. Everyone’s cross is different Jesus asks each of us to carry our own cross – the hard things we face in life. When we follow Jesus, we accept the hard things in our lives and walk in Jesus’ footsteps. He knows what it is like to be you and me. And He knows that following Him is hard to do. Jesus only asks us to do things that He already knows we can do. Even though following Him is hard, Jesus loves us. And He helps us carry our crosses every day.

