March 17, 2024 **DEEP IN OUR HEARTS**

The context to the gospel passage for this Sunday St. John 12:20-33, Jesus was on His way to the cross. His public ministry was coming to a close and a variety of things were unfolding. A crowd of people from many different places had gathered for the Passover Feast. The people in the crowd had many different opinions of Jesus. The religious Jews were upset because people were following Jesus. They were plotting how they might go about killing Him. They said, “Look, how the whole world has gone after Him.”

John writes in this passage about some Greeks, Gentiles who had come to worship at the Passover, went to Philip and said, “Sir, we would like to see Jesus.” They were seekers who were sincere people but they only had limited access at the Feast. They probably approached Philip because he was from Bethsaida where there was a large settlement of Gentiles. Maybe they recognized Philip and Andrew as having Greek names who would be more receptive and less likely to snub them.

When these Greeks (Gentiles) came and requested to see Jesus, He was pleased about it because they were some of the first Gentiles who were being brought into the harvest. He considered them “first-fruits” of the great harvest of Gentiles that was to be brought into the kingdom of God. At that point Jesus explained what is about to happen at the crucifixion when He tells them, if you read the verse 24: “except a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds”.

Some scholars have suggested that these gentiles are not converts but planted by the Roman government to spy on Jesus. They were assessing the seriousness of his claims. This may be the case but I think not. Nothing suggests this. The scriptures say they went up to worship at the feast. But either way Jesus uses the opportunity to announce a shift in his ministry.

Jesus did not answer their request directly. Instead he said, “The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified.” Jesus also says it again in John 17, “the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify thee.” What did Jesus mean by this? Was it an hour like 9:00 in the morning or 1:00 in the afternoon? Why did Jesus answer this request by saying, “the hour has come for the son of man to be glorified, when up until this point he would always say, My hour has not yet come?” Jesus was looking ahead to the cross, the event that all history had been building up to the one main event that he had come to earth for in the first place, to be the Savior of humankind. It was now time for the event to come to pass.

The hour is at hand. It is time, Jesus said, for the Son of man to be glorified. It was that moment when the last sand falls from the hourglass. No time left for the development of new disciples. No time left for miracles to convince the people. No time left for debates with the religious leaders. No time left, the Passion is upon him. The grain of wheat has left the stalk making its descent to the soil below, its death a certainty, its rebirth yet begun. For the disciples this is the critical moment.

Jesus is saying the kernel of the wheat won’t multiply; it won’t produce a crop for the future, it won’t be productive, but if it is planted it will grow and multiply and produce a great harvest. The message Jesus  was trying to get across to these people was that he was the one kernel of wheat, He was on His way to the cross to die, be buried, and be resurrected to new life, and if He did this there would be a great harvest of souls, now and in future generations. It would be the opening of the Gospel for everyone, not just the Jews alone but for all people. Jesus sees the Cross that was soon going to bring them in.

Jesus said, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies it bears much fruit. Jesus then explained what he meant. He said, "The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it." It's true in life isn't it? If we are going to get anything out of it we have to invest ourselves in it. The truth of this is written in creation. It is evident for everyone to see. It is even found in something as small as grain of wheat, a seed. If you like to learn more about the love and Sacrifice of Jesus Christ please join us on Sunday worship at 11:00 AM.

Peace!

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