

Sermon for March 25, 2012 – Lent 5

John 12:20-33

Theme: “Where I am, my servant will also be.”

1. *With Jesus in death.*
2. *With Jesus in honor.*

²⁰ Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." ²² Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. ²³ Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ I tell you the truth, 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. ²⁵ The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. ²⁷ "Now my heart 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. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." ²⁹ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. ³⁰ Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. ³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."

Not too long ago, before GPS became popular, people had to follow written directions and maps in order to get to a place they had not been before. If you ever traveled an unknown road, just using a person's handwritten directions, you might wonder if there might not be a better route. But what happened if you went your own way? You inevitably got lost.

The Christian's life is much like driving an unknown road to heaven. Jesus gives us the directions, but we still question, "Am I on the right road? Jesus tells me to trust in him alone, but this way doesn't seem right."

It is because of doubts like these that our Savior comes to us and says, “Where I am, there my servant will also be.” He shows us the way He went and says to us: *1) Be with me in death and you will 2) be with me in honor.*”

Part One: With Him in death.

Our text begins: *Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus.*

Why did the Greeks want to see Jesus? Most likely they heard rumors about Jesus and wanted to hear him preach. Maybe they even had some questions for him. Whatever the case was, when they were brought to Jesus, He answered the most important question anyone could ask: "How can I be saved?"

This is a question that is in all of our hearts, isn't it? Though we don't often ask it, or think about it, it's there. It's there because we know that we going to die.

We all have a conscience, and we all know that we have sinned against God. We feel burdened because we know that, unless something changes in our relationship with God, we're going to hell.

Our consciences cause us to try to do better. But even then we find no peace in our hearts because nothing we do can give us true peace. For example, if I hurt someone by insulting them, it doesn't matter how many nice things I say about that person, or how much I call myself a fool for saying such things, I can't take my words back. It's done, and I can't change it. Because we can't change our sins, we all are under sin's curse; and the soul who sins is the one that will die.

But Jesus answers the great question (How can I be saved?) in this way: *The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ I tell you the truth, 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.*

Yes, death is needed to pay for sin. There is no other way. But this is exactly why God the Father sent his Son into the world: to die for our sins. Now, an ordinary man can not die for the sins of someone else. Only God can do that. But Jesus is both God and man. He took our sins on himself. When God saw Jesus, He saw our sins and punished his Son for them all. Just think, during the three hours of darkness when Jesus was on the cross, He suffered the eternity of hell fire that your sins had earned.

Just as a kernel of wheat, after it falls to the ground and dies, does not remain in the ground but springs up into a stalk and head producing many seeds, so also Jesus rose up again from the grave after he died. And we, who believe in him, are the seeds Jesus produced.

Now Jesus also has something else to say to us seeds: *The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his 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.*

Just as an apple tree produces apples, and a fig tree, figs, so also Jesus, the sinless Son of God, produces sons and daughters of God. He doesn't produce children of the devil, who will keep on running after sin.

Are you a child of God? Well, Jesus has a little test for you to figure that out. Do you love your sinful life? If you do, than you are going to lose eternal life, because you have just demonstrated that you are not a seed of our risen Savior Jesus. His seeds, people who believe in Him, hate their sinful life. They hate it so much that they always run to Jesus for forgiveness and help to overcome temptation. The only people who will receive eternal life are those who, through Jesus, die to their sins and sinful desires.

"Where I am my servant will also be." Your sins died with Jesus on the cross so that you might be raised with him to live a new life to his glory. We all hear Jesus' call to follow him, and to hate our sinful lives, but do we? Jesus wants us to be where He is, and He is where His word is taught and preached. Do we make taking time for worship and Bible class a priority so we can be where Jesus is? Or do we let leisure or sports take priority over this?

What about our love for gossip and our preoccupation with the material things of this world? These are just a few examples of how we all love our lives more than Christ. Where does that leave us?

Hopefully at the foot of the cross, every moment in our lives, asking Jesus for forgiveness. And without any delay He says to you, "Look at my hands, my feet, my side. I died for you. Your sins are all forgiven. Where I am, you will also be. Now follow me."

After hearing those loving words from Jesus, what else could our response be other than: "Thank you, dear Jesus!" The next time the devil comes and tempts us, Jesus wants us to say: No Satan, may the LORD rebuke you, for *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Where Jesus is there will his servants be also. We have seen how we are with him in death, now let us look at how we are with him in honor.

Part Two: With Him in honor.

The greatest honor God has given us is the forgiveness of sins. But do you know what the strange part about this is? The world considers forgiveness no honor at all. To the world asking for and offering forgiveness is a sign of weakness. But this is not so with God. Earning our forgiveness is Christ's greatest glory. Receiving the forgiveness God himself won for us is our greatest honor. There is no other way to God other than through the forgiveness he won for us. We are with Jesus in his forgiving us and in our forgiving others as he himself forgave us.

Another way we are with Jesus in honor is by being with him in service. Think back to when you were a kid. Do you remember when Mom was baking a cake, or Dad building a shelf and you asked, "Can I help?" How did you feel when Dad gave you that hammer, or when Mom put you on a chair and gave you that frosting covered spoon?

As God's children, he has honored us by allowing us to serve him, and spread the Gospel to others. The world laughs at us for considering service an honor. When we listen to the world with all its sarcasm, we might get tempted to feel foolish. But don't listen to the world. Listen to our Creator, Jesus, who washed the feet of his disciples. Listen to Jesus, whose greatest honor was not being served, but serving, and giving his life as a ransom for many.

Even though the world laughs at us for considering being forgiven, and serving with Jesus, an honor, they won't be laughing when they see the other ways in which God will honor us.

Like a seed, Jesus died and was raised a glorious plant which produced many other seeds. We have already seen that we are these seeds. Now what happens with seeds when they fall into the earth in autumn. They sit there for a while, out of sight, until spring. Then, almost all at once they sprout and grow to be glorious plants.

The same applies to us. We are just seeds of Jesus right now. Unless Jesus comes soon, each of us will die, our bodies will decay, and we won't be physically seen for a while. But when the springtime comes, when Jesus, our sun, comes in all his glory, we will be awakened from the dead, and be raised gloriously.

You know how seeds, when they sprout, resemble the plants they are from? So also you, when you are raised up from the dead, will resemble the glorified Christ, from whom you came.

But there is yet another way in which God honored Jesus, and thus another way in which Jesus will also honor you. God honored Jesus by making him King and ruler over all He created. And, do you know what? Where Jesus is, there also will we, his servants, be! Jesus says: *To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.* Jesus tells us in the Bible that we will judge the world with him; even the angels will be judged by us. What awesome honor we will have with Jesus!

What would you consider more glorious: living in Buckingham place and having a meal cooked for you by 100 people, or serving in a soup kitchen and cooking a meal for 100 people? God says true honor is in serving others in His name, just as Jesus served us.

And just as God honored His Son, because of His service, so also does God promise to honor us - but not because of our service, but because of Jesus' service for us. And, as we have seen, God doesn't just honor his servants in any small way. Being with Jesus means being with Him in all his honor and glory. Dear Christian, God has made you a King to rule with and under His Son. God has exalted and glorified you, the same way he exalted and glorified Christ, for where Jesus is, there will we also be. Amen