



Jesus, speaking about his approaching death, says “the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (Jn 12:23). When Jesus was approached by the Greeks, he knew for sure that his time had come as it was foretold in the Old Testament – that when the non-Jews (not chosen people) come to worship God on Zion, the hour is at hand for the Son of Man to be glorified (Is 2:3, 66:18-21). The non-Jews coming to Jerusalem was a clear indication for Jesus that the prophecy was about to be fulfilled. He made it clear to the Greeks who approached him and his disciples (Jn 12:20-30) that only through death, will he be glorified. “Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (Jn 12:24). Using the imagery of “grain of wheat”, he is speaking about his own impending death on the Cross and his resurrection; a kind of death and rebirth that his disciples also have to go through. His death and resurrection makes eternal life in communion with God available to all.

The “Hour” for Jesus, is to glorify his Father through his death. As a death that gives Life, Jesus’ death will yield a life which nourishes and sustains others; he is being obedient unto death for the love of sinful humanity. Secondly, he will be glorified by the Father for the sacrifice he makes - resurrection and exaltation to heaven where he will be seated at the right hand of the Father. And thirdly, through his death, he will open the gates of heaven for all believers, for all nations. He will open the divine communion to all people. Jesus’ hour provides for all of us, open access to eternal life if we choose to have it. By being “lifted up” in his finest hour, Jesus will draw everyone to himself (Jn 12:32) who chooses to be so drawn.

The truth that we should never forget even in our sleep is that “We were worth the Cross.” For the love of the Father and for us humans, Jesus accepted the Cross. It caused him his life, as he remained true and faithful to his call. He did not avoid the Cross but was obedient to it because “We were worth the Cross.” Did Jesus have his inner struggle to give away the cross? Yes, he did, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done” (Lk 22:42). He was troubled in his soul, but in the end willingly surrenders himself to his Father’s will. Jesus accepts the Cross as his hour, meaning the stepping stone to his passion, death, resurrection and exaltation. Jesus’s movement from death to resurrected life provides the basic pattern for the Christian life. We all must die before we can live. It doesn’t mean physically, although we will die physically. It means we must die to our selfishness and self-

centeredness, to our rebellious sinful nature and willful rejection of God's commands. This dying to self is an ongoing process and happens in little ways. Whenever we die to our Pride, we give birth to Humility. Whenever we die to Selfishness, we give birth to Love. Whenever we die to Anger, we give birth to Peace. Whenever we die to Despair, we give birth to Hope. Whenever we die to Cruelty, we give birth to Kindness. Whenever we die to Indifference, we give birth to Acceptance. Whenever we die to I, Me and Mine, we give birth to We and Ours. When our false self dies, true self made in God's image is born and nurtured. These 'daily deaths' strengthen us spiritually. Anything contrary to God's will and commands must be put to death. "For it is in giving that we receive, it is in forgiving that we are forgiven and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life" (St. Francis of Assisi).

Jesus gives his life for other's good on the Cross and his disciples participate in the saving dynamic by replicating this pattern of loving self-sacrifice; "Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (Jn 12:25). 'World' here in John's Gospel means human beings and their world as they are in rebellion against God and under the spiritual powers of sin, while 'hate' is a Semitic expression meaning to love less or to prefer less. To hate life in this world does not mean that we should disdain our earthly existence as such. Rather, it means detachment from sin and all things in life that lead us away from and cause us to rebel against God. We love less ourselves and love God and the other more. Nothing should get in the way of our preferring God and his will first. He is above all. If we embrace the attitude that Jesus prescribes and put them into practice, we will keep our life for eternal life. To follow Jesus means to embrace the Cross, because the Cross is obedience to God and loving, total self-sacrifice for others. All walks of Christian life take the shape of the Cross, and when faithfully and lovingly lived out, lead to the glory of the resurrection and the honor given by the Father.

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