

The Hour Has Come

Palm Sunday

Pastor Josh Frazee

John 12:20-43

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Yesterday morning, the temperature was cool enough for a light jacket, but the sun was shining. It appeared that it was going to be a beautiful day. But there was more going on than met the eye.

For our confirmand, Garrett, he had questioning to go through. If his experience was anything like mine, he had pored over the questions, but still felt that sinking feeling in his stomach. He might have been wondering: Which questions will pastor ask me? What if I don't say the right thing? What if my mind goes blank?

His questioning was at nine yesterday morning, and he may have been dreading that hour. But then the hour rolled around. His hour had come.

This week, starting this morning, we reflect on another hour for another person. Jesus had finally come to *the* hour of His life on earth—the very hour for which He had been born. Every event that we've heard about from His life from celebrating His birth at Christmas in December to this morning's reading has been leading up to it, to this hour.

Our reading this morning came from the lectionary for the Sunday of the Passion instead of Palm Sunday; however, the start of Holy Week, the start of that final hour, began with Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem on that donkey. That reading is in John's Gospel just prior to the one we'll be using for this morning's sermon. Because of that, we still got palm branches for our children so that they could process in, reminding us how they lined the streets of Jerusalem, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"

It was probably another beautiful day—and even the Pharisees complained that "the world has gone after him." But as we know, and as Jesus was also well aware, that triumphal entry was the beginning of His final hour here on earth. In John's Gospel, we do not hear a word from Jesus for the entire triumphal entry account, so to hear what Jesus had to say about coming to that hour, we turn again to the Gospel text we heard a few minutes ago.

1
Verse

Jesus said, "'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.'"

Though many today might say that Jesus' ministry was cut short, from His own words we hear that Jesus was well aware that His end was near. "'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.'" But what does it mean for Jesus to be glorified? Many at that time believed it meant that the Messiah would establish an earthly kingdom; and that He would have power and prestige here on earth. Some of those lining the streets of Jerusalem with the palm branches expected a ruler who would overthrow the current reign of Rome. This was not to be. Instead of speaking of these kinds of things, Jesus spoke of a crop—a grain of wheat which dies so that it may bear fruit. To those in Jesus' day, and even some today, this word may seem out of place or confusing.

To us, however, we know it to mean that that is what Jesus Himself was going to do. The hour had come for Him to die—and for Him to bear much fruit through that death. You and I are that fruit, if we indeed

we believe in Jesus' death and resurrection for us. How do we believe? We believe by trusting that this hour was for me. We believe by, as Jesus said, ““(hating our) life in this world”” and by serving Jesus and following Him.

To hate our lives means to hate our sin. It is not to think “I'm born in sin and can't help but sin” so that grace may abound—most certainly not. It is to hate sin through faith and to try not to sin. It is to repent when you fall into sin, that is, to turn from the sin and try not to do it again, so that it is not you who do it but the sin in you. We are saints and sinners in this life, but continuing in sin when you know it is wrong can lead you to fall away. So instead we follow Jesus. By following Him, we may suffer instead of doing those things our sinful flesh may want, but we know that we will be exalted at Jesus' return. Jesus suffered the humiliation of becoming man and living on this earth, and, what is more, the excruciating death of a criminal on a cross, so that He might be exalted in being raised by the Father, and, what is more, so that you and I might believe and be raised in exaltation with Him. When the grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, He bears much fruit. Now is the hour for Jesus to die, and He is well aware of the fact.

2
Verse

As we might be before an hour of testing, Jesus said, ““My soul is troubled.”” Yet despite being troubled, what does Jesus say next but ““(W)hat shall I say? “Father, save me from this hour”? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.””

In His humiliation as a man living on the sinful earth, Jesus still put His Father's ways before His own. For that reason, those gathered around Jesus got to hear a voice endorsing His work. Just as at His baptism, “a voice came from heaven.” This time it said in reply to Jesus' words: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The voice from heaven—God Himself—referred back to speaking at Jesus' baptism, and then said He would be glorifying His Name again. This time, it would be at the hour of Jesus' crucifixion.

When the voice from heaven had finished speaking, Jesus said, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of the world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

Jesus knew His hour had come, and He was ready for it. He had entered Jerusalem fully intent on dying for the sins of the people lining the streets, and for you. He didn't need the voice of His Father to encourage Him. No, that voice was for the people gathered then, and for us today. It was to show that when Jesus was lifted up on the cross, it was by the will of God. Here is the word so many today miss when they think of Jesus as only a prophet or a great leader whose life, they believe, was cut too short.

We, on the other hand, believe God's Word concerning His Son's death. We trust that death to be everything that Jesus said it would be: the judgment of the world and the ruler of the world. Over the last few weeks we've been hearing about how our enemies are not flesh and blood, but the world and the authorities, that is, the ruler of the world—and here at last, we've come to the hour of their judgment. Jesus Himself told us this beforehand “to show what kind of death he was going to die. So the crowd answered him, ‘We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?’”

3
Verse

“So Jesus said to them, ‘The light is among you a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you’”—which means, as our catechism students and confirmand learned, so that it doesn’t happen that darkness overtakes you—“The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.””

Jesus’ hour had come, and yet, as an hour takes time to complete, so, too, would it take time for Jesus to be hung on the cross. It would not happen yet. So Jesus tells the people around him, the Greeks and the disciples, to walk in the light while He is still with them. Judgment would be coming, then, just as it is for us now today. And, then as now, those who believe and trust in a Messiah who will come to establish an earthly kingdom and who do not believe in Jesus and the Name of His Father will not be saved.

But you, dear friends in Christ, who not only believe in the Name of God, but also have been baptized into it: into the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, will be saved. We walk in trust of our Lord Jesus and follow Him as we wander the darkness of this world. Yet we walk in the light of His Word, hearing it each weekend and believing on it for life eternal.

You know how this ends, but the hour has not yet come to speak of Jesus bearing fruit. No, it is the time for Him to die like the grain of wheat. “When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.” He hid so that He would be crucified at the right time, at the end of the week. So, too, we end our study here, knowing what is to come, both at the end of the week, and three days later. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.