

GLORIFIED

A SERMON FOR LENT  
SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 2014  
First Presbyterian Church of Marianna  
Ted W. Land, Interim Pastor

JOHN 12:20-33

We're jumping ahead of the calendar a little bit. The story that John tells, about the Greeks, the Gentiles, coming to Philip and asking to see Jesus, and then Andrew going with Philip to tell Jesus actually happens about Wednesday of Holy Week. We haven't gotten to Palm Sunday yet. That is coming next week. But there is so much stuff, so many stories, that we never can seem to get all of them in anyway, so if this one jumps ahead, it won't hurt.

John alone tells us this story. And John alone has the discourse which is a prayer that is not a prayer. John alone tells us of the voice from heaven speaking, to tell that God's name has been glorified, and will be glorified again.

Jesus had said that the hour had come for Him to be glorified.

Of all of the things that were to happen to Him during the days that were ahead of Him, glorified is not the word we would have chosen. Crucified, yes. We affirm in the Apostles' Creed that He was crucified dead and buried. And before that, before that, He was beaten. Scourged. Tortured. Ridiculed. Mocked.

But glorified? Not a word I'd have chosen.

By the time the Gentiles, the Greeks, came seeking Him, He had already made His triumphant entry into the city of Jerusalem. That was as glorious a day as Jesus could have had. He was truly glorified, truly worshipped, as He entered the city, as men and women and children threw their robes on the ground, and covered the roadway with palm branches, to herald His arrival in the city.

But I've often wondered if they really understood what was happening. If they really knew who He was. It is like that song that the choir director in the church I served for 26 years sang on Christmas Eve a number of times, "Sweet Little Jesus Boy, we didn't know who you was. Didn't know you'd come to save us, Lord; to take our sins away. Our eyes was blind, we couldn't see, we didn't know who you was."

But if that crowd on Palm Sunday didn't know who He was, the Gentiles, the Greeks, who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover, might have. Their simple request, "Sir, we would see Jesus," rings down through the centuries.

I wish we lived in a world where more people wanted to see Jesus, to meet Jesus. There is indeed a world out there that needs to see Jesus. And some days, we are the only Jesus they will see. Some days the "Jesus" we take with us is the only Jesus some folks will encounter.

Jesus told Andrew and Philip that the time was come for Him to be glorified. The arrival of the Gentiles, the Greeks, was some sort of signal to Him that His work was over. This is the final moment of His public ministry. From this moment, He withdraws into the Upper Room, where they celebrate the Passover, where He washes the feet of the Apostles, where He institutes the Lord's Supper. The arrival of these men who want to see Jesus is a defining moment.

Some have said that these are the first Gentiles to seek Him. That is not true. Remember the Roman centurion? Jesus said of him that "Not even in Israel have I found such faith." (Matthew 8:11)

Remember the woman at the well? She was a Samaritan, and that was worse than a Gentile? (See John 4)

Both the Centurion and the woman at the well recognized Jesus authority. Both saw Him as a prophet. She asked "Can this be the Christ?" (John 4:29)

And lest we forget, when Jesus healed the ten lepers, the only one that returned to thank Him was the one Samaritan, which caused Jesus to ask, "Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" (Luke 17:18)

But these foreigners, these Greeks, somehow affirmed what the Pharisees had said of Jesus, that the whole world was seeking after Him. (See John 12:19)

This was the sign, the seal, the trigger point. And as we prepare for Holy Week, we need to remember that everything that happened happened so that God could be glorified.

Now those of us who have been Presbyterians forever remember the Westminster Shorter Catechism, which began with the question "What is our chief end?" And the answer was, "To glorify God and enjoy God forever."

We glorify God not just by worshipping and praising God, but by the way we live our lives, in a way that reflects glory to God.

Jesus said that the ones who love their lives lose them, but that the ones who hate their lives in this world will have eternal life.

What that means to me is that when we are satisfied with ourselves, when we are so proud of who we are and what we have done, when we are so sure that we are right and the rest of the world is wrong, we have lost our way if not our lives. When we hate our sins, when we are sorry for what we have done wrong, when we see the plight of our neighbors and feel guilty about how much we have, and want to share what we have with them, then we are moving in the right

direction. When we question everything we do, and hold it up against that classic question, "What would Jesus do?", then we are headed in the right direction.

When we do what is right, what is pure, what is just, what is fair, then by our actions, by our deeds, God is glorified.

This is what Jesus said: "If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also."

There's another old gospel hymn, another spiritual, that goes,

"I have decided to follow Jesus.  
I have decided to follow Jesus.  
I have decided to follow Jesus  
No turning back, no turning back.

The world behind me,  
The cross before me  
The world behind me,  
The cross before me  
The world behind me  
The cross before me  
No turning back, no turning back.

Though none go with me  
I still will follow  
Though none go with me  
I still will follow  
Though none go with me  
I still will follow.  
No turning back, No turning back.

I have decided to follow Jesus  
I have decided to follow Jesus  
I have decided to follow Jesus  
No turning back, No turning back."

Jesus did not turn back from the way that led to the cross. We must never turn back if we have decided to follow Jesus.