

## **John 12:20-33**<sup>vi vii</sup>

Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to 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. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. “Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor. “Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

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### <sup>vi</sup> **About the Gospel: John 12:20-33**

The appearance of “some Greeks” (v. 20, probably “God-fearers”—those who were attracted to Judaism but did not fully keep the law) indicates that Jesus’ public ministry is now complete. Ironically, the complaint of the Pharisees in 12:19 is shown to be true.

Jesus’ response is to announce that his “hour has come” (v. 23), the time for his glorification in death, resurrection and ascension. As Jesus’ mission bore fruit only through his death, so Christians bear fruit only through death to self. The term hate (v. 25) would reinforce the challenge to separate oneself from what this life requires. It does not express an emotion so much as an action requiring separation.

Jesus freely accepts his destiny in a plea that God’s plan be carried out as the expression of God’s name, that is, of God’s essential character. The victory over Satan is won through Jesus’ “lifting up” (v. 32), a term for both his crucifixion and his exaltation), but its working out in this life is the ongoing task of Christians.

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## vii **Reflection and Response**

We can find hints of Jesus' coming passion in today's gospel. The authorities cannot tolerate the raising of Lazarus, so they finalize plans to kill both him and Jesus. Jesus himself senses that the final hour is coming. If he were like most of us, he'd get out now while he can. But his response is unique.

It includes elements of struggle and a final acceptance that transcends evil, inviting resurrection. It inspires those of us who struggle to see that tension was also integral to Jesus' life. Jesus shows us that conflict can be creative. He toys with the idea of rejecting a mission that will bring pain, yet sees beyond the present turmoil in his soul. How could he abandon the project for which he came?

From his internal struggle comes his victory over death. The seed can split its shell only in the moist ground. So through crucifixion, Jesus can break through the limitations that restrict him to one culture, one time, one place and one human body. The Greeks represent the many cultures beyond the Jewish enclave that long for Jesus, but which will be touched by the Christian message only after his death. During Jesus' lifetime, his encounters with non-Jews were few. Yet the people who would turn to him after he died were for the most part Gentiles.

Perhaps the unfinished story continues in our lives, most of us Gentiles as well. How intently do we seek Jesus? How often do we see him? Do we honor his presence within our hearts and within other people? Do we grasp the centrality of crucifixion in his story? in ours? And do we hope for that resurrected life which will unite all peoples?