

Main Idea: In John 12:20-26, Jesus’ response reveals two things that so many people don’t know about Jesus.

- I. Jesus is a different kind of king (20-23).
 - A. He came to reach all kinds of people (20-22).
 - B. He deserves glory (23).
 - C. He receives glory by dying (23).
 - II. Jesus established a different kind of kingdom (24-26).
 - A. His kingdom involves dying (24).
 1. This was true for Jesus.
 2. This is true for His followers.
 - B. His kingdom involves hating (25).
 - C. His kingdom involves serving (26a).
 - D. His kingdom involves following (26b).
 - E. His kingdom involves waiting for future honor (26c).
- Let’s Make It Personal: It boils down to this...
1. To live, I must die.
 2. To gain, I must lose.
 3. To reap, I must go into the ground.
 4. To be honored, I must serve.
 5. To do this, I must trust in the real Jesus.

At first glance, it’s not a Christmas text. But in reality, it’s a perfect text to help us prepare for Christmas. When we open our Bibles to John 12, we’ve jumped into the Palm Sunday account, in which Jesus comes riding into Jerusalem on a donkey to the shouts of an emotional Jewish crowd.

But John doesn’t just tell us the story. Matthew, Mark, and Luke already did that. Instead John puts the spotlight on various responses to Jesus demonstrated in this well known account. You see, all kinds of people come to Jesus, and people come to Him for all kinds of reasons. That’s true then and now.

Who was Jesus really? When you look at John 12 you see a good representation of what people think of the Christ that God sent into the world.

Just scan through the chapter and notice what people did with Jesus. Notice that...

Martha served Jesus (2a). Lazarus reclined with Jesus (2b). Mary anointed Jesus (3). Judas questioned Jesus (4-8). Then another curious crowd came to Jesus (9). The chief priests plotted to get rid of the evidence that pointed to Jesus (10-11).

Then a huge crowd greeted Jesus with palm branches and shouted “Save now!” (Hosanna, 13). But the Pharisees muttered to each other (19).

Carson: “Up to this point, the ‘hour’ has always been future (2:4; 4:21, 23; 7:30; 8:20), the ‘hour’ that is nothing less than the appointed time for Jesus’ death, resurrection and exaltation—in short, his glorification. Now, dramatically, the request of the Greeks changes the parameters: *The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*”¹

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 437). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

In John 12:20-26, Jesus' response reveals two things that so many people don't know about Jesus.

I. Jesus is a different kind of king (20-23).

A. He came to reach all kinds of people (20-22).

Verse 20, "Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast."

Verse 21, "They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. 'Sir,' they said, 'we would like to see Jesus.'"

Verse 22, "Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus."

Philip is a Greek name. Perhaps that's why they came to him, though Andrew also had a Greek name. They may have approached him because he was from Bethsaida, a town in Galilee near the Gentile region known as the Decapolis.

John says they "asked." The tense of the verb gives the sense "they kept asking."

Of course, they don't merely want to *see* Jesus. They probably already could see Him across the temple court. By *see* they mean *talk with, interact with, get to know*.²

Philip wasn't sure how to handle the request. Perhaps because he recalled what Jesus said earlier in Matthew 10:5, when He sent the twelve out on a preaching mission, "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans." And when He told them He was sent "only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt 15:24)."

B. He deserves glory (23).

² Morris, p. 592.

Verse 23, “Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”

He refers to Himself as “the Son of Man.” This no doubt took the disciples’ minds back to Daniel 7:13-14, “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”

Notice Daniel’s prophecy. Who will worship the Son of Man? *All peoples, nations, and men of every language.*

With the Greeks’ request, *Sir, we would see Jesus*, that’s now beginning to happen. And so Jesus responds, “The hour has come.”

What’s interesting is that we’re not told what happened to these Greeks. Did they meet Jesus? Did He talk with them? They’re not mentioned again in the story. For John, that doesn’t seem to matter. What matters is Jesus’ response to their request.

Kent Hughes makes this helpful observation, “In the opening chapters of Matthew’s gospel we read that wise men from the East came to see Jesus, and here in John, shortly before the cross, we see wise men from the West coming to Jesus. Gentiles framed both sides of Jesus’ life.”³

So it’s time for glory, says Jesus. Based on the Daniel prophecy, you might assume that meant it was time for Jesus to overthrow the Romans and rule the world. That’s, of course, what the disciples and just about everybody else in Israel wanted. But that’s *not* what Jesus had in mind. Again, He’s a very different kind of king than the world has ever seen, and here’s one of the most striking indications.

He didn’t come to receive glory by fighting. Rather...

C. He receives glory by dying (23).

Carson: “Whether or not their request was granted is not recorded; theologically speaking, the point is irrelevant (and therefore omitted), because even if they met with Jesus at this point there is a sense in which they could not yet ‘see’ him, they could not

³ Kent Hughes, p. 299.

yet belong to him, until the 'hour' is over and Jesus has been 'lifted up from the earth' (v. 32)."⁴

MacArthur, "The Greeks wanted to see Him. But Jesus knew that the only way they could truly enjoy fellowship with Him was through His atoning sacrifice."⁵

II. Jesus established a different kind of kingdom (24-26).

Verses 24-26, "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. 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. My Father will honor the one who serves me."

A. His kingdom involves dying (24).

1. *This was true for Jesus.*
2. *This is true for His followers.*

In his book, *A Gospel Primer for Christians*, Milton Vincent writes, "When my flesh yearns for some prohibited thing, I must die. When called to do something I don't want to do, I must die. When I wish to be selfish and serve no one, I must die. When shattered by hardships that I despise, I must die. When wanting to cling to wrongs done against me, I must die. When enticed by allurements of the world, I must die. When wishing to keep besetting sins secret, I must die. When wants that are borderline needs are left unmet, I must die. When dreams that are good seem shoved aside, I must die."⁶

After breaking my leg last week, I had a little extra down time on my hands, which led to some extra reading, which brought me into contact with a man who has since become a new hero in my life.

His name is Paul Schneider, and he modeled very powerfully the truth that Jesus' kingdom involves dying. I learned about this man from the book, *July 24, 1944: Germans Against Hitler*.

⁴ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 438). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

⁵ MacArthur, p. 28.

⁶ *Gospel Primer*, p. 41.

Let me tell you a little of his story. Schneider was born in 1897 in the village of Pferdsfeld, Germany. His father was a country parson. He also would enter the ministry. First, he fought in the first World War and earned the Iron Cross. After the war he received his theological education and then began pastoring the church where his father was, after he had a stroke.

Pastor Schneider saw something that most other Germans didn't see, at least not in the early 1930s. He saw that the Nazis were not "Christian", as they portrayed themselves, but basically anti-religious and flat out pagan. And he said so. And that of course infuriated the Nazi authorities.

In October 1933 he told his congregation that the Nazis were wrong to try and build a Third Reich without seeking the internal regeneration of the German people. That didn't sit well with the authorities that be, and Schneider was removed from his pastorate. He ended up being relocated to a little town called Dickenschied, 120 miles west, with the thought that he couldn't do too much damage there.

Within a few months he was in hot water again with the Nazis. A 17-year old boy died, and Schneider conducted his funeral service. But since the boy was a member of the Hitler Youth movement, a Nazi dignitary interrupted the funeral to make a political speech in which he said that the dead boy had gone to join the "Horst-Wessel Brigade" in heaven. Pastor Schneider then protested, pointing out with his blunt humor that "there was no evidence that St. Peter gave automatic entry into heaven to members of the Hitler Youth."⁷

He was arrested for that remark and put in prison. His congregation drew up a petition to object, and he was released. It wasn't long before he was rearrested, sent back to prison, then released, over and over again. If he would only be quiet, he could have a problem free life with his wife, six children, and friendly congregation.

But he wouldn't. He *couldn't*. He knew that he belonged to a King who called him to die. And so die he did, day by day. He died to the comfortable life that could have been his. He died to popularity and notoriety and acceptance.

He made a public statement, "Germany's fate does not depend on the presence of German troops on the Rhine, but on the German people's attitude to the word of God."

In 1937 he preached a sermon from Luke 17 that infuriated the Gestapo who arrested him again, then released him, and ordered him not to go back to his congregation. All he had to do was *not* preach, and he could remain a free, family man.

But he refused. He knew his calling. Just days after returning to care for his flock, the Gestapo arrested him again, and as they took him away he cried out to his wife, "Tell my congregation that I and always will be their pastor."

He would never see freedom again. In November 1937 he was taken to Buchenwald concentration camp. At one of the first prisoner parades there, he refused to take off his cap when the swastika flag was hoisted. He was immediately seized, placed in the dreaded rack, and given 25 stokes of the whip. Six was enough typically to make a man howl in agony. There is no record that Schneider uttered a sound.

Then he was thrown into a solitary cell, with no lighting, where he slept on the bare floor often in an inch of water. He existed on a bread and water diet and was beaten continually by the SS overseer. I won't detail the tortures he endured over the next two years.

⁷ July 20, 1944, p. 126.

It was known that all he had to do was promise not to go back to his church and he would be a free man. A fellow prisoner said he should spare himself and go home and care for his wife and six children. His answer was, "I know why I am here. Do you think that God gave me children that I might only provide for their material welfare? Were they not entrusted to me so that I might safeguard them for eternity?"⁸

Though in solitary, he would often cry out from his cell when he heard people on the camp parade ground. "Jesus said, I am the life." For such "preaching" he would again be beaten mercilessly.

A fellow prisoner, Alfred Leikam, later wrote this testimonial: "In camp life the greatest of all trials for me was to stay silent in the face of unimaginable wrongs inflicted on the people there, or even to be forced to participate in such things... As far as I know, there was only one man in Germany who did not share in this guilt. This was Pastor Schneider, who even in the concentration camp protested by word and deed against injustice, and for this died a martyr's death."⁹

In 1939 the Nazis took Schneider's life, making him the first protestant pastor to die at their hands. In reality, however, he died long before that, the day he took his Master's words to heart and became a seed dropped into the ground.

Friends, we belong to a King whose kingdom involves dying.

B. His kingdom involves hating (25).

Ironically, according to Jesus, if you love your life, you'll destroy it.

Leon Morris explains, "The man whose priorities are right has such an attitude of love for the things of God that it makes all interest in the affairs of this life appear by comparison as hatred."¹⁰

C. His kingdom involves serving (26a).

D. His kingdom involves following (26b).

Mark 8:34, "Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

E. His kingdom involves waiting for future honor (26c).

⁸ Ibid, p. 130.

⁹ Ibid, p. 132.

¹⁰ Morris, p. 594.

Let's Make It Personal: It boils down to this...

1. *To live, I must die.*

George Muller was used by God to accomplish remarkable things for the Lord's honor, particularly, caring for orphans. When someone asked him, "What has been the secret of your life?" Muller hung his head and responded, "There was a day when I died." Then he bent lower and said, "Died to George Muller, his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will; died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame even of brethren or friends."¹¹

2. *To gain, I must lose.*

3. *To reap, I must go into the ground.*

4. *To be honored, I must serve.*

5. *To do this, I must trust in the real Jesus.*

¹¹ Quote taken from Hughes, p. 301.