

*Read also Psalm 100*

Do you ever wonder what was in Jesus' mind right before He died? Do you wonder how He did it? How He carried through? We always want the "inside scoop" on people. Turn on any news channel and you will hear all the details about the wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton. What is his bride like? What is on his mind before the wedding? It's an event we don't want to miss!

Today's story encompasses Jesus' last public discourse before his arrest and trial. Thousands gathered in Jerusalem for the Passover festival. Jesus had entered Jerusalem as if proclaiming His kingship. This point in time is the pinnacle of history; everything will change from this point. The coming of the Gentiles marks the climax of Jesus' ministry. What thoughts did He have as "his hour had come?" Let's listen to the story. READ John 12:20-22.

These Greeks came to the disciple Philip because they weren't sure Jesus would receive them. Philip wasn't sure either. Greeks didn't talk to Jews and vice versa so this request was "out there," something radical. So Philip talked to Andrew, and then both of them went to Jesus. The news that Gentiles were seeking Him out inspired these thoughts in Jesus. Listen to them. READ John 12:23-26

That's an interesting response – but odd. The act of these Gentiles coming to see Jesus triggered these thoughts about a kernel of wheat dying. What does that have to do with people from other nations seeking Him out? Suddenly we get an inside view into the reason Jesus came to earth. Let's see if we can follow His reasoning.

The gospel of John begins this way. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . and the word became flesh . . . and we have seen his glory" (Jn. 1:1, 14) Jesus shows us the God we have never seen and teaches us about a heaven He says is as real as earth. But Jesus was rejected by His people (Jn. 1: 14, 11). Nevertheless, God's plan moves forward, like a warship moves through dangerous waters. God is intent on the mission.

God's mission began in Genesis with Abraham when God said, "Move from your homeland and follow Me. I will make your name great and you will be a blessing; all who bless you I will bless and those who curse you I will curse" (Gen. 12:1-3).

Then God built Abraham's family into a large nation and called them out of Egypt, something no other god had done, mostly because there is no other real God. God showed His signs of power before all Egypt so others would have the opportunity to see and believe. God's law given to Israel at that time made provision for the foreigner. Israel was to be kind to the alien for they had once been aliens. (Deut. 24) God was moving God's people forward toward becoming a blessing to all nations.

But the going was often rough because Israel struggled to obey the Lord. Eventually they were conquered by Babylon and the people exiled. However, God never gave up on God's mission. A prophet named Daniel was raised up, and the Lord called him to witness before King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel told him the good news that God would honor Nebuchadnezzar if he

learned that God is sovereign over the kingdom of mortals. (Dan. 4:25) And it happened because the King bowed the knee to God.

Then another prophet, Jonah, was sent to Nineveh, Assyria with the news to repent and turn to the God of Israel, who has the good news of life. Jonah reluctantly went. He had to talk to people like Bill Maher, who last Sunday at the Winspear Opera House in Dallas spent most of his monologue “mocking people’s reliance on and belief in religion<sup>1</sup> (read article). Jonah resisted talking to the Bill Mahers of the ancient world whom he encountered in Nineveh, but amazingly when he called the people to repent, they did! They turned themselves around and believed in God.

You see, all throughout history God continually cares that all people whether kings or servants, no matter what nation they live in, God wants all people to have the opportunity to know that God loves to save.

John tells us this in this way:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God” (Jn 3:16-18).

Surely all of this was on Jesus’ mind when these Gentiles came to Him. And so He said, "Now my soul is deeply troubled. Should I pray, *'Father, save me from this hour'*? But this is the very reason I came! Father, bring glory to your name" (Jn. 12:27-28a).

These are the thoughts on Jesus’ mind. It was as hard for Him on a human level as it is for you and me to stand for Christ when we know we must. The word used is like that word which described how Jesus felt right outside Lazarus’ tomb. Jesus’ soul “went into turmoil.” It reflects emotions of anguish, distress, agitation, horror as he tried to overcome revulsion and stay true to the course.

Perhaps the emotion you feel when you care about something more than anything in the world and you are moved to make it happen. Jesus desired with all his heart and soul to complete God’s plan, even though it meant He would experience the most excruciating rejection and death.  
READ Jn. 12:28b-32.

Jesus could move forward into the plan because He looked at these disciples who had followed Him and He looked at the Gentiles who were drawn to Him, and He had been to heaven beforehand and He knew He personally would be the one to usher them in to eternal life.

Can you grasp His overwhelming love for you? Can you see His desire for you?

---

<sup>1</sup>Tom Maurstad, “Nothing but love for Maher,” comedy review, Dallas Morning News, March 29, 2011, 1E

Through His act you gain something you could never get on your own. He loves you that much and personally takes your hand to lift you into life. So he said to them and to us, *you must join me in this.*

It doesn't happen with your passivity or without your participation. *If you cling to life just as it is, you lose that life when you die. But if you let it go, you will have it forever; for eternity. Jesus states, "Anyone who wants to be my disciple must follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And the Father will honor anyone who serves me"* (Jn. 12:25-26).

How does the Father honor us? God honors us in this life with blessings and answered prayer, not necessarily protecting us from reversals in life, but sustaining us through them, and then giving us in the future eternal life. For the judgment of God is both positive and negative; positive for those who believe and negative for those who don't.

John writes in Revelation: "And I saw a great white throne and the one sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide. I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life" (20:11).

Why are some people fleeing at the judgment? Maybe it was a personal choice when during their lifetime on earth they said something like "religion is for fools and just plain stupid," or maybe they said, *Jesus is not the only way; there are many ways to God.* But in the end they are shocked to see Jesus Christ on the throne. And they realize they stand there before Him solely on their own record.

That grieves and anguishes me and I would like to join Jesus to do everything I can to share His message until all the world knows that Jesus saves. That's the work of you, the church – "the church must shout it," and as the choir sang, "no door can keep them out."

After the Samaritan woman Jesus met at the well believed in Him, Jesus told his disciples, "the fields are ripe with fruit for the kingdom of God" and, "the harvesters are paid good wages," and "the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life." Jesus adds, "What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike!" (Jn 4:35-36).

Again, when a Roman Centurion, an outsider, came to Him asking for healing for his servant, Jesus turned to the Jews around Him and said, "Many will come from all nations, willing to have faith." So he stated to those religious people, and he asks us the same, "Will you let go of your own life and follow Me?"

To follow Jesus is to be concerned with His concerns and do what He does. He wants God's plans for salvation to move forward. What are you doing to carry out that plan? The Bill Mahers are out there saying faith is not worth it. Who will bear the news, "It truly is worth it?" May it be you this week.

AMEN