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SERMON TITLE: **Why Did Jesus Have to Die?**

*Walking as Disciples of Jesus Series*

SCRIPTURE: John 12:19-26

DATE: March 29, 2020

Online service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).

Read also Isaiah 53:4-12. Online service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org)

**Q**n the Bible, Jesus is called these names: *King of Kings. Lord of Lords. Ruler of Heaven and Earth. Jesus Messiah. Name above all names. Every knee shall bow in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth. Sovereign. He's coming on the Clouds. The Mighty God, the Prince of Peace. Alpha and Omega. The Lord God Almighty Reigns. Shepherd, Counselor, Everlasting Father. Savior of the world. Worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.*<sup>1</sup>

Jesus calls himself *Son of Man; the Good Shepherd; your Lord, Teacher, and Master; One who serves.*<sup>2</sup> He alone is able to open the Scrolls of the Book of Life.<sup>3</sup>

But the Bible said throughout and up to this passage in John's Gospel that Jesus' time had not yet come. That changes in today's Scripture passage. To put it in context, here's how his week had gone.

Jesus had been in Bethany, a suburb two miles outside Jerusalem, because a tragedy hit the household of some of his best friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Lazarus had suddenly become ill, the sisters sent for Jesus, but by the time Jesus arrives, Lazarus had died. They were so distraught. All their friends were there.

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. You probably know the story.

Afterward, Jesus found a donkey and rode it into Jerusalem, and because of the raising of Lazarus, a great many people followed him. The Pharisees, in exasperation, proclaimed:

"The whole world has gone after him." Let's read about it. READ John 12:20-26

The Pharisees said, "The whole world has gone after him." They were more right than they knew! All these Jews were following him and now we see that even some Gentiles were drawn to him.

This was unusual for Greeks to come to Jesus. Jews and Gentiles were deeply divided. They had nothing to do with one another. So that's why the Greeks went not to Jesus directly, but to his disciple Philip. Philip didn't know if Jesus would see them, so he asked Andrew. Andrew didn't know so together they went to ask Jesus.

This was the trigger. "The time has come!" Jesus would enter his glory.

*King of Kings. Lord of Lords. Ruler of Heaven and Earth. Jesus Messiah. Name above all names. Every knee shall bow in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth. Sovereign. Worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.*

What does it take to make a king of the world?

There's a poet named Shel Silverstein who pondered that question. He wrote a poem about it. It's called "God's Wheel." It goes like this:

God says to me with kind of a smile,  
"Hey how would you like to be God awhile  
And steer the world?"  
"Okay," says I, "I'll give it a try.  
Where do I set?  
How much do I get?  
What time is lunch?  
When can I quit?"  
"Gimme back that wheel," says God,  
"I don't think you're quite ready yet."<sup>4</sup>

Satan has the perspective of the boy in the poem. A world ruler should think about himself first. Remember when Jesus first began his ministry? Right after his baptism he went into the wilderness for forty days and was tempted by the devil.

"The devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours" (Luke 4:5-7).

The devil has the attitude of "how much do I get?"

But Jesus knew that we must put God first, worship God only and no other person or thing. The way he put it was *unless I die to*

<sup>1</sup> Eph. 1:10; Phil. 2:9-11; Mt. 24:30, 26:31; Is. 9:6-7; 1 Jn. 4:14; Rev. 19:16, 5:5, 9, 12

<sup>2</sup> Jn. 13:16, 12:23; Mt 12:18

<sup>3</sup> Rev 3:5

<sup>4</sup> Shel Silverstein, "God's Wheel" in *A Light in the Attic*, (Harper & Row: New York, 1981), 152.

*myself like a seed that seems dead when it is buried in the earth, I will not be fruitful.*

Think about that image. It's a time of planting right now. You open the packet of seeds. Pour them into your hand. Perhaps you

put them in a bowl because you intend to go out to the garden and put them in the flowerbed. But you procrastinate and leave them in the bowl.

Will they grow? Will they bloom? Will anything come of them?

That seed must be buried. The seed is a symbol of death. After all, it's already been harvested. It's already seemingly dead.

Life is like that. You can live your life fully but in the end you are going to lose your life to death.

Jesus could have grasped the rulership of the world that Satan offered. He would have reigned. If he had bowed to Satan, he would have done it "for what he could get." But then he would have grown old and he would have lost his life and that was all.

But God has a different vision of kingship. It crosses generation upon generation and is so fruitful. It began with a promise to a man named Abraham:

- ~ God said, "All the families on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:3b)
- ~ God said, "I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore." (Genesis 22:17)
- ~ God said, "All who curse you will be cursed, and all who bless you will be blessed." (Genesis 27:29)

Some Gentiles came to Jesus' disciples and said, "We want to meet Jesus. Can you help us?" Some Gentiles—"All the families on earth will be blessed." It would begin now.

Jesus chose the better way; Jesus went to the cross. Why did Jesus have to die? Jesus died to produce a plentiful harvest of new lives – generations of people of faith as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore.

Are you one of those people? It takes following Jesus.

If you love your life in this world only; then life will be concerned with the here and now:

*Where do I set?  
How much do I get?  
What time is lunch?  
When can I quit?"*

Jesus could have done that. After all, his death was considered by humans to be the most terrible shame. His life was considered, in light of earthly vision as a tragic failure.

He never owned property  
Didn't have a formal education  
Worked for only a brief time  
Never wrote a book  
Never got married and had a family  
Didn't leave an inheritance

Oh wait . . . *did he leave an inheritance?*

- After he died for our sins, he left us a tremendous inheritance of life eternally.
- He had many descendants across hundreds of generations.
- His home is a mansion and his office is a throne.
- His book has guided hundreds of thousands of people over as many years.
- His wisdom far exceeds any institution of education the world has ever known.

From God's perspective his death was a glorious success.

"Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity," says Jesus.

"Anyone who wants to be my disciple must follow me, because my servants must be where I am," says Jesus.

What you are giving up by following Jesus is being the ruler of your own life. You are joining a community that is much greater than yourself. You are devoting your gifts and talents to bless others, and your entire city around you. To grasp that idea—think of how you approach your job. Is it about

*Where do I set?  
How much do I get?  
What time is lunch?  
When can I quit?"*

Or are you open to blessing your neighborhood, your city, your family, your church? Are you into reaching out to others who might want to meet Jesus, even if they are very different than you? For he desires to bless the whole world.

Why did Jesus have to die? So you could live. Eternally. Blessedly.

AMEN