

Grace, mercy, and peace are yours in abundance through faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

²⁰ Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” ²² Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

²³ Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

²⁷ “Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!”

Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” ²⁹ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

³⁰ Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. ³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.
This is the Gospel of our Lord.

Dear Friends,

Thousands of years ago there were two nations facing off in battle. As the soldiers got ready to attack each other, one of the nations sent out their champion. He was 9 feet tall and his armor weighed 125 pounds all by itself. He carried a spear that had a bronze point which weighed 15 pounds and he could throw that spear a long way. This champion stood on a small hill and taunted the opposing army – “Send out your champion and we will fight each other. If I win, then you will become our slaves and if your champion wins then we will become your slaves. Give me a man to fight!” The opposing army shrank back in terror. They had no one to match this man’s size or skill. What were they going to do? After many days of taunting the answer to their dilemma came in the form of a shepherd boy who did not like this Philistine taunting God’s people. God was with David and he killed Goliath with a slingshot and a stone. Through this unlikely champion, God defeated the enemy of his people and preserved them.

Today as we consider our Gospel lesson, we see Jesus as our unlikely champion proclaiming, **“Now is the time to see His glory.”** As we look closely at our Gospel lesson we can see, **“His glory in his victory on the cross,”** and we can see, **“The cross as our great motivation in life.”**

I. “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” So many times, before the disciples had heard, “The time has not yet come,” but finally Jesus is telling them. “It’s time – time for the Son of Man to be glorified.” It’s interesting to note that Jesus’ enemies, the Jewish leaders, had said, “not during the Passover,” so as not to rile up the extra people in Jerusalem and Satan had tried numerous times and in different ways to keep Jesus away from Jerusalem, but God picks the time and the circumstances and now was the time.

I'm sure the disciples had it in their minds as to how this would all work out. I would guess that they were expecting a grand scene where Jesus would somehow overthrow the Romans and establish his own kingdom – an earthly kingdom – right here, centered on Jerusalem. They were looking for glory, honor and prestige – but they had it all wrong.

Jesus knew what was going through their minds so he gave them an illustration to help them understand how he was going to be glorified. **“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.”** If Jesus did what the disciples wanted, then nothing would happen and we would still be in our sins but Jesus understood his mission and he understood the price he would have to pay to win the battle over sin, death and the power of the Devil. That is why he told them, **“Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.”**

At this point the disciples were troubled – they knew coming to Jerusalem was a bad idea. Jesus had talked about his suffering and death before and now he was talking about his death once again. How could he be glorified if he was going to die; especially if he was going to be crucified? This wasn't the picture the disciples had in mind.

Jesus was getting ready for battle but this would be a different kind of battle. Jesus, our champion, against Satan, the prince of this world. That is why Jesus told his disciples, **“Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.”** Jesus would be glorified as he defeated Satan. He would do that by paying for our sins on the cross so that Satan can no longer accuse us and lay the guilt for our sins on our shoulders. At the end of this battle Jesus would die. Not because he has lost the battle but so he can rise three days later to show us he had not only defeated the devil, but by his resurrection he would assure us that he has taken away the sting of death. Paul tells us, **“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,”** (Php 2:9-10). His name has truly been glorified!

Yet, at times, we are like the disciples. We want to see a strong, powerful Savior like a powerful king wiping out all his enemies. We want to see Jesus getting rid of those unbelievers and sinners who make our lives difficult. We, too, would like to see Jesus turn our country into heaven on earth. Sometimes our idea of what we think God's glory should look like is as skewed as the disciples.

But Jesus is strong and powerful and he defeated our greatest enemy – Satan. We see his power displayed on the cross as he suffered under the weight of the sins of the world – the crushing weight of our sins. While we would like life to be perfect, sin surrounds us in this world and every day we contribute to the sins of the world so we won't see a perfect world until we are home in heaven. We are thankful for our Savior's glory hidden in his suffering on the cross and for the gift of faith that helps us to see his glory and brings us forgiveness of sins and the sure hope of a perfect life in heaven.

It is our Savior's love and glory displayed on the cross that motivates us to follow him.

II. How do you follow Christ? Jesus said, **“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. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.”** When I worked in the electronics industry, I often heard the phrase to “Think outside the box.” In a way, I think Jesus is telling us the same thing; think outside the box – don’t get caught up in the philosophy and values of the world. They only lead to a life lost in sin.

Rather follow Christ. Listen to him speak to you through his Word. Today he is telling us to see his glory and we not only see it but we experience the result of his glory as we receive forgiveness for our sins. Then he continues to speak to us and says, **“Serve me.”** That gets a little harder but how can we refuse after looking to the cross and seeing his glory and love.

Christ certainly came into the world to serve us but what does our service to him look like? Prayers, material support of the ministry, helping friends or neighbors or acquaintances with their needs, giving someone a ride to church or other places, showing compassion by listening and offering encouragement, sharing Jesus with your children and grandchildren – thin outside of the box – there are many ways to serve and to reflect the love of Christ in our actions.

2000 years ago, a battle took place. The champion of this world, Satan, against our champion, Jesus. Many people thought it would be a short battle and they thought they knew the outcome. They ignored the fact that this was God’s champion fighting for us and nothing is impossible for God. Jesus, dealt a fatal blow to the world’s champion – Satan and crushed him, but Satan struck Jesus’ heel indicating the victory came at a great price – his suffering and death.

Many people try to ignore our Savior’s victory and sometimes we even take it for granted but as we look to the cross may we never forget the glory of the cross where Jesus defeated Satan for us – a defeat that brings us forgiveness, life and salvation. As we share in our Savior’s victory may we that love of our Savior motivate us to serve him in all that we do. Amen.