

**John 12:23-26**

23 Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 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. 25 Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

Chapter 12 in the Gospel of John takes place in Jerusalem after the triumphant entry. Some Greeks that were attending the Passover Festival asked Philip if they could see Jesus. Philip informed Andrew of this and both of them went to Jesus and told him that some Greeks were looking to talk with him. The arrival of the Greeks is highly symbolic as it prefigures the future mission of the church to include Gentiles into God's promise. So, their arrival marks Jesus' hour.

In the Scripture, Jesus does not answer directly but points to the arrival of his hour. He emphasizes that it is a time of glory. This is the fulfillment of universal salvation. It marks the beginning of a new age. Jesus' response is that his hour has come. He explains the situation in agricultural terms of a grain of wheat. A seed is one single grain. It has to die before it can bear fruit. A seed is just a seed until it is planted in the ground. You know how it goes. One tomato seed planted in the ground grows one plant. That one plant produces 30 or more tomatoes. Each tomato has over 150 seeds. So, in reality one seed produces thousands.

An example was listed in Encyclopedia Britannica of an experiment in England. One grain of wheat was planted and it produced several stalks with ears of wheat. Each grain was transplanted and it multiplied significantly. After two years it produced and separated into 32,500 grains of wheat. Jesus uses this grain of wheat analogy because it is something everyone can relate to that demonstrates a tremendous harvest. Jesus uses a metaphor for his own life to demonstrate the glory. He must die for salvation to spread to humanity. His death will bring new life and produce a bountiful harvest. The death of Christ produces a tremendous harvest for the Jews and the Gentiles.

Once again Jesus offers the repeated lesson that it is necessary to follow him. Christ expects followers to follow in his steps. We are to adopt his standards and values and put our lives to the same uses as his. The point of Christianity is to be like Christ. Whoever serves Jesus will be honored by God. This is more than a theory to be accepted; this is a life to be lived daily.

Jesus speaks about his imminent death. His hour has come is something that he has not said before. Since the beginning of his public ministry the narrative has been that his hour is coming. Many times in the Bible he has stated that his hour has not yet come. Now that it is here he reveals that the mystery of his death is for the harvest to take place. His death will lead to life. Therefore, his death is a triumph not a tragedy.

The lesson is one of discipleship because honor is given to those that actually follow. I read a story about a lawyer in Romania that lost his professional status and had to do menial labor because he openly confessed Christ as his Savior. That is just one example of many people that take the words of Christ seriously. When Christ says follow

me, it is those who faithfully follow that are honored by God. The world puts material things first but when you take God seriously it is a life changing event. When you get married it is a change of life. When you have children it is a change of life. You take your new life seriously and make sure their needs are taken care of. You will risk your life to protect them and devote your life to provide for them. When we take God seriously, the Lord is our number one priority. We don't count the cost because the cost is not what is important; it is the relationship that is important. We live on the earth, not by the standards of the earth but by divine standards.

The Pharisees complained that the whole world has gone after him. The arrival of the Greeks confirms it as interest in Christ stretched beyond Jewish circles. Now the hour has come for salvation to go to the world.