

**SIGNIFICANT FINAL APPEARANCE**  
**Sermon for the 5<sup>th</sup> mid-week Lenten Service, 2021**  
**John 12:23-36**

Grace and peace to you all from our risen Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The text for our sermon today is John 12:23-36: <sup>23</sup> **Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone, but, if it dies, it produces much grain.**

<sup>25</sup> **“The person who loves his life loses it, and the person who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> If anyone serves Me, he should follow Me, and where I am there also My servant will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honour him. <sup>27</sup> Now My soul is troubled, and what am I to say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour!’? No! For this reason, I have come to this hour. <sup>28</sup> Father, glorify Your name!”**

**Then a voice came from heaven: “I both have glorified it and shall glorify it again.”**

<sup>29</sup> **Therefore, the crowd that was standing there and heard it began to say that it had thundered. Others were saying, “An angel has spoken to Him.”**

<sup>30</sup> **Jesus answered: “This voice has not come because of Me but because of you. <sup>31</sup> Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. <sup>32</sup> I, if I am lifted up from the earth, shall also draw all people to Myself.”**

<sup>33</sup> **He said this to indicate the kind of death that He was going to die.**

<sup>34</sup> **The crowd answered Him, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains for ever. How, then, are You saying that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this ‘Son of Man’?”**

<sup>35</sup> **Then Jesus told them, “The Light is still among you for a little while. Walk while you have the Light, that darkness may not overtake you! The person who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. <sup>36</sup> While you have the Light, believe in the Light that you may become children of light!”**

**After Jesus had said these things, He went away and hid from them.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

If you only had one final, public appearance to make in your life, what would you say? What would you want those who would hear you to remember? What would you want those who would hear you to do?

Our text takes us to the end of the day on Tuesday of Holy Week. This section of Scripture is significant because it *marks the final public appearance by Jesus prior to His arrest and crucifixion*. It's the final time He and the crowds in Jerusalem will exchange words before He is arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane and placed on trial. So what does Jesus want us to remember from His significant final appearance?

Let's focus on several of the statements Jesus makes in this significant last appearance in public.

First, He states, **“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone, but, if it dies, it produces much grain.”** Clearly Jesus is speaking about His coming crucifixion, death, and burial.

On several earlier occasions, Jesus had stated that His time had not yet come. But now, His time *had come*. It was all happening according to His timetable, which is the timetable of the Father. All was now ready for Him to endure that which He had come into the world to endure - to accomplish that for which the Father had sent Him into this world.

Christ would be glorified - but not in the way some were expecting. He would not bring about a revolution and establish an earthly kingdom in which He would rule with subjects bowing down to Him. No, instead He would let others triumph over Him, and He would actually bow down His head in death on a cross. There He would voluntarily offer His life as payment in full for all sin and all evil. The way to being glorified for Christ was by way of crucifixion. He would not reign from a palace. He would hang from a cross. He would not lie on a luxurious bed of ivory. He would lie on the cold stone of a tomb. He would not be wrapped in the finest fabrics. He would be wrapped in burial cloths. And it is through death that He will **“produce much grain”** indeed. Jesus compares His own death and burial to that of a grain of wheat bearing much fruit after it has been dead and buried in the ground. It is a paradox to be sure: life comes by way of death.

The fruit, the life that Jesus is talking about, is ours. Life comes for us by way of Christ's death. By His death, Jesus has destroyed death's power to harm us. He has destroyed sin's power to condemn us. Death is no longer the end. The grave is not the final resting place. As Christ had said a little earlier in the Gospel of John, "*I am the Resurrection and the Life. The person who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will assuredly never die*" (John 11:25-26).

We also see in this final public appearance of our Saviour prior to His arrest a great deal of transparency and vulnerability. He is truly human. As the appointed time is drawing closer, He states in our text, "**Now My soul is troubled, and what am I to say? 'Father, save Me from this hour!'**? No! **For this reason, I have come to this hour.**" These words call to mind the words He will pray to the Father in the very near future in the Garden of Gethsemane, "*My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from Me!*" (Matt. 26:39). So also in our text, Jesus speculates, "**What am I to say? 'Father, save Me from this hour!'**?"

Jesus knew the horror of what was ahead for Him. It would include being beaten, whipped, spat upon, mocked, and suffering excruciating pain as He hung on the cross. You and I can only imagine the pain, the anguish, the suffering, and the shame He would endure.

But nothing would compare to the isolation of being abandoned by His own Father as He would hang there on the cross. So troubled would He be that He would cry out for all to hear, "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*" (Matt. 27:46). Sadly, you and I know the answer to that question. Jesus was forsaken because He was bearing our sin, our sin that should have forever separated us from God. Is it any wonder that His soul is troubled at this point?

Yet, as He did in the Garden of Gethsemane, so also, He does here. He will not let His human emotions override the will of the Father, the reason He came into this world, and the mission He has come to accomplish. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He was quick to add to His request to let this cup pass from Him the words, "*Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will!*" (Matt. 26:39). And so also here, He adds the words, "**For this reason, I have come to this hour.**"

Yes, for this very purpose He had come into the world, and for this very purpose He had come to this specific point in time. As He said Himself, "*The Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve and give His life as a*

*ransom for many.”* (Matt. 20:28). He came to die so that we might live, not just here but eternally in the presence of God. For this reason, He had come into the world.

What would be the final words of Christ’s final public appearance prior to His arrest and crucifixion? He says, **“While you have the Light, believe in the Light that you may become children of light!”** He issues one final appeal to trust and believe in Him. Even as He is facing all of the personal anxiety, His concern is not for Himself, but that all who are within hearing distance may believe in Him, trust in Him, and have confidence in Him as their Saviour. He and the Father are united in not wanting any to perish, but rather that everyone should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved.

As a church and as individual members of our Lord’s Church, our message to those walking in the darkness of sin and unbelief is identical to the message Christ delivered in His final public appearance prior to His arrest, namely, **“While you have the Light, believe in the Light that you may become children of light!”** Who knows how many more opportunities anyone outside of faith in Jesus Christ will have to “believe in the Light” before the darkness of death closes in and it is too late? I know that you join me in praying that God will use us to bring the light of Jesus Christ to those living in the darkness of sin and unbelief. May He use each one of us, our actions and our words, as His instruments of light and life in this world.

And so concludes Christ’s final public appearance before His arrest. An appearance in which He announces that His time has come, that He will be buried, and that He will produce much fruit. An appearance in which He speaks about His fear and trepidation concerning the horrific events He will endure in the next few days. An appearance in which He appeals one last time for faith on the part of His hearers. It was a significant final public appearance indeed! Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.