

## **John 12:20-33 Keep Goal of Christ in View! Lent 5 March 22, 2015 Examination Sunday**

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Grace and peace from God our Father and from our crucified and risen Lord, Jesus Christ! Amen.

God's word about Jesus' powerful victory and how it affects our future is written in John 12:20-33

These are Your Words heavenly Father by which You call us to stand by faith to win the victory in Christ.

Dear Christian Friends,

This is quite a Sunday. In 1<sup>st</sup> service we have an affirmation of a child's baptism. Brooke was baptized at the hospital according to Christ's command. We can be certain that she received God's promised blessing of forgiveness and salvation. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> service we see another part of Christ's command to "*make disciples by teaching them all things.*" That teaching led the students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade to their examination. The Holy Spirit has been at work through His Word preparing them to receive the Lord's Supper for their good. Baptism and confirmation are not meant to be an end in themselves. They prepare people for a life of faith and service to Christ until He calls them to eternal glory! Christ had the same goal at His baptism of winning eternal life and later when He gave His life on the cross. God encourages us to:

### **Keep the goal of Christ in view!**

**First, Jesus had much to accomplish in a short time.** It was Tuesday of holy week. Jesus had His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Sunday. He drove out the cheaters from the temple on Monday. Now He was teaching in the temple courts to reach at as many people as possible before His death. There were certain godly Greeks attending the Passover at Jerusalem. These godly Greeks wanted to see Jesus. (v.20) We are not told why. They may have just been curious. They may have wanted to see if He was the promised Savior. With only two days left before His arrest, there would be little time to get to know Him. Yet, Jesus' words gave them hope. He said, "*The hour has come for the Son of Man 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.*" (v.23-24) The godly Greeks might not fully understand why Jesus needed to die, but neither did Jesus' disciples. Jesus had promised that after His death and resurrection He would send the Holy Spirit who would help them understand so they could be certain that Jesus accomplished God's goal to save them. Like a seed that dies, so Jesus' death would produce blessings for people extending to the whole world.

Old Testament Scripture clearly told of the time when Jesus would draw people from all over the world. Isaiah wrote, "*In that day [Christ] will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.*" (Isaiah 11:10) He also wrote, "*Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.*" (Isaiah 60:3) With such a great view of the future, no wonder Christ spoke about finishing His work and receiving glory. His death became the door to a glorious life in heaven. His death was like the seed that died to become a plant producing countless seeds.

When Jesus died on the cross that week, He died for all people. He said, "*When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself.*" (v. 32) God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son. All who repent of their sins and trust in Christ's forgiveness have eternal life! Jesus' death would bring life to millions of people who were spiritually dead in sin: Jews, Greeks, Romans, and every other nationality. John wrote of this in Revelation 5. "*You were slain, and with Your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.*" (5:9) What a wonderful goal Jesus accomplished for all people! Jesus even had us in mind when He gave up His life. This was all a part of God's goal for Him to accomplish!

**Second, what can we accomplish?** After Jesus finished His saving work, His disciples' work was just beginning. Those godly Greeks no doubt left Jerusalem with all kinds of questions after Jesus died. But, they and many others like them would return to Jerusalem for the festival of Pentecost. They might have heard the preaching of Jesus' disciples would have been among 1,000's who learned the truth of Jesus, believed in God's promise of salvation in Christ, and were baptized. Jesus told the disciples to proclaim the news of His saving work in Jerusalem and to the ends of the earth. The Holy Spirit moved them to do this. Now we are the ones growing in the faith so we can share God's good news with others.

There was a recent Barna poll about what influenced people's sense of identity. The top item was family at over 62 %. Second item of influence was that they were Americans at 52%. A distant third was religion at 38% and just as many (38%) said that religion had little or no influence on them. We need to remember Jesus' words, *"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. (v.25)*

We need to keep the Word of Jesus in our lives. Whatever else we do in life, we want to know Christ and be able to speak of Him. Sinful distractions can cause us lose our connection to Christ so that we would die in our sins and suffer forever. We must daily repent of our sins and return to Christ for His forgiveness. God promised, *"Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life."* (Revelation 2:10) We, as the children of God, want to do His will just like Jesus did. Jesus promised, *"Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me."* (v.26) As we trust and follow Jesus, we can be certain that God has great blessings ahead for us!

Now is a golden opportunity to share the good news of Jesus. Our world is becoming more godless. People's lives are empty. They need to be encouraged by Christ. We know people who are sick, in the hospital or in difficult situations. They need our prayers. They need to know that Christ can help them with any problem. Sometimes people feel a burden of guilt from past sins. We can tell them that Jesus died to take away every sin. If they are sorry for those sins and trust in Jesus, they will receive His free forgiveness. In Christ, God will never leave them.

We can direct people to God's Word or invite them to worship. Special services are coming, what a great time to invite people! Yesterday at our Easter for Kids we saw many families here that had been invited by our members. Thank you for inviting them to hear about Jesus! So often in a world of violence and shocking sin it seems like the devil is winning. Yet, we hold to Jesus' promise that His death has defeated the prince of evil. Jesus' resurrection proved His victory over Satan and over the power of death. The Kingdom of Christ continues to advance. We saw evidence of that today in the affirmation of baptism where God called Brooke McNeil to be His child through His means grace. God also has armed these students with His Word that they might stand against the devil's schemes to win the victory in Christ. Christ is still working through His Word to accomplish His goals for their lives. He will do the same for all of us as we make it our goal to gladly continue in His Word for life! Amen.