

Gospel lesson

Today's Gospel reading jumps to just after Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem at the start of holy week.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-Light-world/>

John 12:20-33 (NRSV)

²⁰Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks.

²¹They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

²²Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

²³Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

²⁴Very 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.

²⁵Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the

Father will honor.

²⁷ "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say-- 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.

²⁸ "Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

²⁹ The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."

³⁰ Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine.

³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out.

³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

³³ He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

The word of God for the people of God

Interactive lesson



picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/photo-of-people-doing-handshakes-3184416/>; credit fauxels

Who would you like to meet, that you have never met?

<Let them respond>

What do you picture yourself doing with them?

<Let them respond>

Do you think you would want to stay in their company after the initial encounter? <Let them respond>

What kinds of things do you think you would need to do, in order for that person to want to keep you around? <Let them respond>

Do you think you would have liked to meet Jesus during Holy Week, before His crucifixion?

<Let them respond>

What do you picture yourself doing with Him?

<Let them respond>

What did Jesus say people would need to do, in order to be with Him? <Let them respond>

Do you think Jesus spoke of losing one's life in a literal sense for us? Why/why not? <Let them respond>

Jesus calls us to let the priorities of this world go and to focus on serving God's will. Sometimes that can be exceedingly hard! But Jesus told us God will honor those who faithfully serve.

What does that service look like to you? What do you picture yourself doing for the Lord?

<Let them respond>

May we all find ways to serve Jesus and honor our Creator through the power of the Holy Spirit, that God's kingdom may be more fully known on this earth.

<Hymn “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus” TFWS # 2129>

Message: Whoever Serves



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/depths-of-love/fifth-sunday-in-lent-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/fifth-sunday-in-lent-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Beloved Servant Master,

as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may better learn how to serve You well. Amen.

Our “Depths of Love” series leads us today to “Whoever Serves”:

“At this stage of our Lenten journey, we encounter the fruit and the charge that comes with losing our life to find it in God-service.”



picture from MMMS collection

Kids make messes. You set up something for them to do, thinking it can be contained, and they do stuff

beyond what you had planned, causing unexpected mayhem – and then someone has to clean up the mess.

Any parent knows, you have to clean up your kids' messes again and again, until they get old enough to take care of their messes themselves – and then, you not only have to teach them what needs doing before they can do it for themselves, you have to teach them why it needs doing so that they will do it.

In the Old Testament, we hear about God working with people, cleaning up their messes again and again, coming up with new covenants again and again.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/job-suffering/>

I think they may even have gotten a little complacent with God cleaning up their messes, the way the psalmist asks God to take away their guilt: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.”

There is nothing in there about taking responsibility for the aftermath of their sins, or trying to set things right with God’s help, just a “do it all for me” kind of request. Luckily, our Parent who art in heaven is eternally patient and loving.

Yet God expects more from us. I believe humanity is growing, like a child grows and matures over time. God sees where we are at, what humankind is capable of, and sets expectations accordingly. We hear from the prophet Jeremiah that God planned it for us.

Our heavenly Parent made a new covenant with us through Jesus, writing God's law on our hearts with the Holy Spirit. But first God had to show us what to do and why we need to do it.

The author of Hebrews describes Jesus as being reverently obedient to God, even through suffering. Jesus is called a high priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.

For those who do not know, Melchizedek was a king and priest of God Most High who blessed Abram, right before the Lord promised Abram offspring as numerous as the stars and the land later called the "Promised Land," before Abram was renamed Abraham. Melchizedek came before all of that and, as a king, served as priest for more people than just Abram.

The implication is that Jesus is high priest for more than just the descendants of Abraham - Jesus tends to the needs of all of the people of the world. Thus it is significant that Greeks come, wanting to see the itinerant preacher in the Jewish holy lands.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-Light-world/>, reversed

Their arrival is a sign that Jesus' ministry is going to a new level. That is why, instead of His greeting them, we hear Jesus talking about His impending death. Remember that a parent has to teach their children both what to do and why?

Jesus starts explaining what is needed for us to start helping clean up the mess caused by Sin. He used the metaphor of a grain of wheat; this both describes why He is willing to go to the cross and why we need to let go of the priorities of this world – essentially dying to our old ways of life – to bear the fruit of more people reconciled to & having faith in God.

We spoke earlier about getting to meet people and what we would need to do to stay with them. Jesus is clear: we need to serve our Savior, following what He taught us to do through His words and actions. Whoever serves Jesus, the Father will honor.



picture from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/depths-of-love/fifth-sunday-in-lent-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/fifth-sunday-in-lent-year-b-graphics>

Since you are here, chances are that you are already believers, sanctified for the kingdom. You know when

you run into trouble to breathe, pray, and trust God. Now, we are called to serve Jesus, following Him more closely. What does that look like for you today?

Look for anywhere where you do something that is at someone's expense, leaving them with insufficient resources to live a healthy life. Note that it could be something emotional, mental, or spiritual as well as something physical.

Strive to find a healthier way to live that does not undo the physical, spiritual, mental, or emotional health of anyone - including yourself. Seek to nurture instead - especially where you see that someone is hurting in some way, even if they refuse to admit it. And always, always, ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, so you can understand what truly nurtures in the given circumstances.

Praise God for the blessings you have and are able to share, giving thanks for how God helps you in the presence of others, that they too may see the glory of God, how God honors the faithful, and thus seek to follow Jesus as well. The more we serve Christ with the power of the Holy Spirit, the greater the kingdom of God will be known on this earth.