

## The Jesus We Can See John 12:20-36

During His discourse on the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said **“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”** (Matthew 7:7-8)

The psalmist states that **“those who seek the Lord will praise Him.”** (Psalm 22:26)

From time to time we sing a chorus based on **Psalm 24:6** **“Such is the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face, O God of Jacob.”**

David is confident of God’s deliverance as he prays about those who conspire against him. In his prayer he says **“My heart says of You, ‘Seek His face!’ Your face, Lord, I will seek.”** (Psalm 27:8)

Knowing tremendous thirst as he walked through the desert in Judah, David likened it to how he thirsted after God. **“O God, You are my God, earnestly I seek You; my soul thirsts for You, my body longs for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.”** (Psalm 63:1)

Isaiah exhorts us to **“Seek the Lord while He may be found; call on Him while He is near.”** (55:6)

Similarly, Jeremiah, writing for the Lord says, **“You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the Lord.** (29:13-14)

I don’t know if you have ever intentionally sought someone out or what it took to track them down. Maybe it was an old friend from High School or college you haven’t seen in decades. It could have been a neighbor from where you used to live. One of you moved away and you wanted to reconnect. A coworker with whom you had hit it off, but with downsizing or better opportunities led to a moving away and out of touch.

Some try to find an old army pal.

For some reason they are on your mind and you wonder what they’re up to so you begin the long

search. You Google their name or see if they are on Facebook or some other social media. If you should find an address or phone number, would they remember you? You seek to connect with them.

Jesus is closing in on His earthly destination. A few days earlier He had ridden into Jerusalem. The mass of people gathered for the Passover welcomed Him with open arms, hailing Him as the long-awaited Messiah prophesied about in the Old Testament.

People from all over came to Jerusalem including Greeks to worship God. In **John 12** we find out more about the visit by some foreigners.

### I. THE VISIT BY SOME FOREIGNERS – vv. 20-26

First, there is a plea worth noting made by them.

#### A. A Plea Worth Noting – vv. 20-24

In this plea, there is first a request.

##### 1. A request – vv. 20-22

We learn from our passage that there are Greeks along with the Jewish worshippers who came to the Passover. From what we read we assume that they were God-fearing Gentiles who sought to know God and live by His commands. Perhaps they had become disillusioned by the worship of pagan gods with its blatant immorality and saw within Judaism an attraction to its monotheism and moral laws. Back in **John 10:16**, Jesus spoke of other sheep who were not of this sheep pen, which referred to the Jews, that would listen to His voice and become part of one flock. The other sheep He spoke of referred to Gentiles who would be saved.

Because of the request they made of Philip, it is assumed that they were in the Temple. The Temple Herod built had four separate courts designed for specific groups of people.

The court of women was the only place where women could meet in the Temple. It’s where the poor box was located and where Jesus observed the widow putting in her two coins.

The Court of Israel was where ceremonially clean Jewish men were allowed.

The Court of priests was where the altar was located and only the Levitical priests could enter this area.

The fourth area was the court of Gentiles. It's also referred to as the outer court. This was the only area where non-Jews and those who were considered impure had access to. This is the area where the money changers and those selling animals for sacrifice set up shop and the place Jesus purged.

Non-Jews were forbidden to enter any other area. Signs written in Latin and Greek were posted warning that any non-Jew crossing into any other area was punishable by death.

Somehow these Greeks had heard about Jesus or maybe had heard Him speak or do one of His miracles. As they milled about the courtyard of the Gentiles, they may have noticed Jesus walking into the inner courtyard with His disciples. Wanting to talk with Him, they approached Philip. We aren't told if they knew Philip previously or if it was by chance they happened to pick one of the two disciples with Greek names. That John includes some personal information about where Philip was from may give us a clue that perhaps they were from Bethsaida in Galilee as well. We can only wonder if there was any connection between them.

Whatever the case, they came with a simple request and we don't know what they wanted to see Jesus about. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus too, but he was content with climbing up into the branches of a Sycamore tree and just observe him as He walked by. He didn't have any other interest, but Jesus had other plans that included his salvation. Their request was more than just wanting to see Jesus or snap a couple pictures with Him.

I attended a conference where I got a picture of then Vice President Pence. I have a picture of me standing with Michele Bachman. I didn't get to talk with them. I only saw them.

While His primary ministry was to the Jews, Jesus also ministered to Gentiles on occasion.

In **Matthew 8**, a centurion came to Jesus asking Him to heal a servant who was near death.

In the same chapter, He healed a Gentile demoniac from Gadarene.

When He healed the 10 lepers in **Luke 17**, one was a Samaritan. They were a mixed people group that came when Jews married Gentiles.

In **John 4**, He met the Samaritan woman at the well and talked about being the Messiah.

Then in **Matthew 15**, the faith of a Gentile woman was reward when Jesus healed her daughter.

In our text, some Greeks wanted to see Jesus. The word "see" means to have an interview with. It was more than just wanting to tell their friends back home that they saw Jesus. They wanted to talk with Him, but after **verse 22** we are left to wonder if they got their meeting with Him and if so, we are left to wonder what they discussed. To set up a meeting, they approached Philip. Philip went to Andrew. They both went to Jesus with the plea from the Greeks.

From the request of the Greeks, we see a reply from Jesus.

## 2. A reply – vv. 23-24

Jesus was drawing closer to His final hour. At other times He had spoken that it was not His hour.

John MacArthur states: "My hour has not yet come is a phrase that constantly refers to Jesus' death and exaltation (**John 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1**). He was on a divine schedule decreed by God before the foundation of the world."

No other event would alter God's plans for Jesus' sacrificial death, because it wasn't yet His time. Now the hour had finally arrived. In His reply, He spoke of three things that would happen to Him.

### a. He would be glorified – v. 23

Jesus again, begins speaking about His death. For us death is a time of humiliation. But for Jesus, death

was a time He would be glorified. Glorification would come through both His crucifixion and His resurrection and exaltation.

### John 12:41

A note in my study Bible reads that “Isaiah spoke primarily of the glory of God (6:3). John spoke of the glory of Jesus and made no basic distinction between the two, attesting Jesus’ oneness with God. The thought of glory here is complex. There is the idea of majesty, and there is also the idea that Jesus’ death on the cross and His subsequent resurrection and exaltation show His real glory. Isaiah foresaw the rejection of Christ, as the passages quoted [from] Isaiah 53:1; 6:10 show. He spoke of the Messiah both in the words about blind eyes and hard hearts, on the one hand, and about healing, on the other. This is the cross and this the glory, for the cross and resurrection and exaltation portray both suffering and healing, rejection and triumph, humiliation and glory.”

Just as the cross brought glory to Christ, we find glory in the cross as well. We sing:

Jesus keep me near the cross  
There a precious fountain  
Free to all, a healing stream  
Flows from Calvary's mountain

In the cross, in the cross  
Be my glory ever  
Till my raptured soul shall find  
Rest beyond the river

Where the cross to the Romans was an implement of torture, humiliation, and death, for Jesus it was for His glory, a display of obedience to the Father and salvation for you and me. The death by which He would glorify the Father, would provide eternal life to the believer. His willing sacrifice on the cross for others in obedience to the Father brought Him glory. Let His cross forever be our glory.

His glory would come through the crucifixion.

### b. He would be crucified – v. 24a

Using an illustration from agricultural, Jesus spoke about the necessity of the seed to die in order for it

to produce a harvest. For a person to receive eternal life it was necessary for Jesus to die. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

The seed must perish for it to produce. So while He spoke of being crucified, He also spoke of being multiplied.

### c. He would be multiplied – v. 24b

It is that time of year when gardeners will be planning for their flower and vegetable beds. Robyn will shop for plants already started, but will also buy packets of seeds to plant like green beans and beets. She will dig a little furrow, pour in the seeds and then cover them up. Now I don’t know enough about germination, but I do know to look for those little plants poking up in the soil.

Had Jesus not died, He could not be multiplied. As one seed must die in order to produce a harvest, so Jesus’ death would give many eternal life.

John Phillips writes “The Lord could see Himself multiplied in the ages to come as a result of being obedient unto death.”

The paradox is that death is the way to life. But without His death, we can’t have eternal life. This life then, leaves us with a paradox worth noting.

### B. A Paradox Worth Noting – v. 25

What Jesus says here is something that He has spoken about before. It came right after Peter’s confession about Jesus being Christ the Son of God. It was a time Jesus also spoke about His death.

### Luke 9:18-25

The paradox for the disciple is to hate his life in this world. Jesus doesn’t mean that we go around loathing our existence and have a fatalist mindset. The point Jesus wants to make is that as a believer, our love for and commitment to God should be so great that affection for anything else would appear a distant second or as if it was something we hated. Jesus taught the same thing about earthly relationships, not that we should hate others, which goes against His teaching to love others, but that we

love God with our whole being. Anything and anyone can become an idol, so we need to put those things in proper perspective by loving God with our whole heart. In essence, we must die to self, put our will and desires aside to follow Christ.

**Romans 12:1**

**II Corinthians 5:14-15**

**Galatians 6:14**

When we come to the cross for salvation, sin is not only put to death, but so is our self, our will, our desires. As we determine to now live for Christ, it is a call to surrender our lives.

**HYMN #596 – I Surrender All**

That is a difficult hymn to sing. Full surrender. That's the call here and in verses like **Luke 9:23**. It is a principle worth noting that we find in **verse 26** of our text.

### **C. A Principle Worth Noting – v. 26**

First, it is a principle for His followers.

#### **1. It is a principle for His followers – v. 26a**

In **John 14:21** Jesus will tell His disciples that they would show their love for Him if they kept His commandments. It's a principle that applies to us as well. A servant always follows the master and does the master's bidding out of willing obedience. There is no hesitation, no resentment, no objection. We do the will of the master. It's in the song we sing.

Take my will and make it Thine –  
It shall be no longer mine;  
Take my heart – it is Thine own,  
It shall be Thy royal throne,  
It shall be Thy royal throne.

Walvoord and Zuch write: "His true disciples (those who serve Him) follow Him in humiliation and later in honor and glory."

**Romans 8:17**

**II Timothy 2:11-12**

The psalmist says **"I delight to do Your will, O Lord."**

Following Christ in service means that we aren't called to live a comfortable life, but a life that is conformed to His likeness. We are not to be conformed to the world, but to transform our mind and life through Christ and His Word.

The question is this: **are you following this world or are you following Christ? Are you more in love with this world which offers you nothing of lasting value or do you love Christ more who died for you so that you could have eternal life?**

**Are you losing your life or saving it?**

It is a principle for His followers.

It is then a principle about His Father.

#### **2. It is a principle about His Father – v. 26b**

It is my belief that the reward Jesus is speaking of here is more than just eternal life. **John Phillips** states that "it's possible to have a saved soul but a lost life." By that he means that those whom the Father will reward are those Jesus just said who have served Him.

**I Corinthians 3:10-15**

God will judge our works. Some works will stand the test as they pass through the fire but won't be burned up while other works will pass through the fire and be consumed. **In our works did we serve God or self? Was it done in love? Was it done in humility? Was it done in kindness? Was it done for God's glory or was it self-serving? Did we serve to get noticed? Did we serve to get a reward here and now? Did we serve out of obligation? Did we serve with resentment?**

God the Father will reward faithful service.

The visit by these foreigners sparked quite a conversation by Jesus about what was around the corner for Him and for His followers. Because of His death, it was a call of servanthood for those who would follow Him. The second part of our passage focuses on the voice of the Father.

### **II. THE VOICE OF THE FATHER – vv. 27-36**

What the Father has to say is sparked by what Jesus says first. In **verse 27**, we see the Lord's anguish.

### A. The Lord's Anguish – v. 27

The thoughts of Jesus took Him to the cross that was now just days away. His heart was heavy. It was troubled. He was in anguish. The word troubled means to shake or stir, to be agitated. It's the same word used in **John 5:7** where it is said that an angel would come on occasion and stir the water in a pool. The first person to step in the pool after it was stirred would be healed.

It can mean severe mental or spiritual agitation causing someone to be upset or horrified. As it appears here, it is in the present tense indicating that Jesus experienced a feeling of ongoing trouble because of what lay ahead for Him. He was troubled knowing the kinds of physical abuse He would endure, but even more so, He was troubled because He knew He would bear all the sin of the world and consequently all the wrath of God for that sin. He was troubled because for a time, He knew He would be separated from the Father because He would be made sin. He was not just playing the part, acting it out as some would have us believe. He was experiencing it for real.

**Galatians 3:13** “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.”

**Hebrews 5:7-8** “During the days of Jesus' life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the One who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverent submission. Although He was a son, He learned obedience from what He suffered.”

**I Peter 2:24** “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree...”

**I Peter 3:18** “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.”

**II Corinthians 5:21** says He was made sin for us.

Because of what was just ahead of Him, He was

troubled in spirit. That was the Lord's anguish. Next, we see the Lord's aspiration.

### B. The Lord's Aspiration – v. 28a

In these verses Jesus tells us the level of commitment He has to the will of the Father. The line of questions doesn't mean He was having second thoughts, but instead indicating that He was praying about the very reason He had come to earth. **Luke 19:10** says He came to seek and save the lost.

**Mark 10:45** tells us Jesus didn't come to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many. He would not shrink back from His purpose in becoming a sacrifice for our sin. He willingly desired to submit to the Father.

**I John 2:2** “[Jesus] is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

**I John 4:10** “This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

God would receive glory through the sacrifice of Jesus. He aspired to obey the Father for our sake. In what He was about to do, we see the Lord's affirmation.

### C. The Lord's Affirmation – vv. 28b-30

This is now the third time the Father spoke affirming that He was pleased with Jesus.

He spoke at His baptism.

He spoke at His transfiguration.

He speaks here affirming that He was receiving glory through the obedience of His Son.

There were those who heard a thunderous noise and attributed the sound to something natural.

Others thought it was supernatural, the voice of an angel.

But Jesus heard the voice of the Father and in His distress, the voice of His Father was encouraging.

**How often do we need that kind of affirmation from God when our hearts are troubled?** When the trials of life weigh us down, it is encouraging to read God's Word and receive affirmation that He is an

ever-present help in time of trouble; that though we walk through death's shadow He is always with us. God's voice of affirmation echoes throughout the pages of Scripture to encourage and strengthen us. Find peace in His still small voice as it speaks comfort in your distress.

In **verse 31**, Jesus gives us an announcement.

#### **D. The Lord's Announcement – v. 31**

A few verses earlier Jesus spoke about rewards given to His servants who faithfully followed Him. Here He gives a declaration of judgment on the world and the prince of the world or Satan. His death would be an indictment on the world for sin. **Romans 6:23** tells us that the wages, the penalty, the debt, the payment for sin is death. Sin can't be left unjudged. God can't and won't overlook sin. On the one hand while God is love and is not willing that any should perish, He is also just and must punish sin. **I John 5:12** tells us that without the Son, without trusting Him by faith for salvation, that person without the Son, will not have eternal life. But the good news from **verse 11** is that those who have the Son have life. And so we see in **verses 32-34** that Jesus speaks of His atonement.

#### **E. The Lord's Atonement – vv. 32-33**

Jesus's death on the cross would be God's method of defeating sin and Satan, giving all men the opportunity to believe and receive eternal life.

#### **Colossians 1:13-14**

Everyone without distinction is included in what Jesus said. In **Revelation 5:9** it says His blood purchased salvation for people from every tribe, language, and nation. This does not mean that all will be saved, but that all have the opportunity to be saved because of His death. But the Jews were opposed to this idea. In this we see the Lord's antagonists.

#### **F. The Lord's Antagonists – v. 34**

From what Jesus just said about His death, the Jews listening to Him couldn't believe that He was the Messiah. Days earlier they hailed Him as the king

and son of David, a title for the Messiah. From their understanding of the Old Testament, they believed the Messiah would live forever, so how could Jesus be the Messiah if He was going to die? Their antagonism would lead to His arrest and assault and death.

In reply we see the Lord's awareness.

#### **G. The Lord's Awareness – vv. 35-36**

In **John 8:12** Jesus said He was the light of the world, the light that would bring them out of spiritual darkness. Here He tells those listening that His light would be there just a short while longer. They needed to accept the light and walk in the light so that darkness would not overtake them and lead them blindly along. He then challenged them to put their trust in the light. Faith moves people out of spiritual darkness and into spiritual light. His earthly ministry was about over. This would be the Lord's final public appearance. These people saw no light in Christ but remained chained to the law.

Each one of us has the opportunity to accept or reject Jesus as the light. How important it is to take advantage of the light while it is still available to seek Him for eternal life.

**Romans 10:9-10, 13** “That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved... ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”

**Hebrews 3:13** “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts... See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.”

Jesus came to offer each of us eternal life.

**Do you need to make that decision today?**

Greeks came seeking Jesus. **Are you?**