

Contexts

John's Gospel

- **Structure of John's Gospel**

1:1-18: Prologue – An introduction to and summary of the career of the incarnate Word.

1:19-12:50: Part One: The Book of Signs: the Word reveals himself to the world and to his own, but they do not accept him.

13:1-20:31: Part Two: The Book of Glory: To those who accept him, the Word shows his glory by returning to the Father in death, resurrection and ascension. Fully glorified, he communicates the Spirit of life.

21:1-25: Epilogue: Galilean resurrection appearances and second conclusion.

- It is the only Gospel to call Jesus "God".
- Purpose of Gospel is so that those who follow Jesus might have the kind of faith that would give them eternal life, namely, the faith that Jesus was God's only Son, possessing God's own life and had come into the world from above that people might be given that life (and thus be begotten by God) and become God's children. (Raymond Brown SS)

John 12:20-33 – things to notice

- This text is almost at the end of the Book of Signs (see above).
- Simple, heart-felt request: "We want to see Jesus". (Note the connection between seeing and faith in John's Gospel).
- The "Greeks" are gentiles (others) who are believers in God – a possible reference to the mission to the Gentiles undertaken by the Johannine churches and a symbol that all the world is coming to belief in Jesus.
- Why do they approach Philip? Why does Philip go to Andrew? Why do they both go to Jesus? Philip, Andrew & Peter are all from the same town: Bethsaida.
- Jesus' reply: Now the hour has come – provoked by the request of the Greeks – why? The gentiles coming to belief in Jesus is the culmination of his mission.
- Note the three "Now"s in this section of John – these things are already happening ('Now the hour has come'; 'Now my soul is troubled'; 'Now sentence is being passed').
- 'Now the hour has come...to be glorified': Jesus glorifies God in death – God glorifies Jesus in resurrection.
- "Unless a grain of wheat falls *into* (not 'on' as in the Lectionary) the ground and dies... it remains alone" – probably a common saying but used by John to mean that only Jesus' death makes salvation for others possible. Jesus enters into communion (is not alone) with his followers through his death and resurrection. The Church will not be left 'alone' after Jesus death, but will be brought to communion with him and with the Father. This is the 'rich harvest' of Jesus' mission.
- "The one who loves his life will lose it": reference to suffering among the Johannine churches? Classical contrast of life 'in this world' and the 'eternal life' which Jesus brings.
- "Where I am my servant will be too" – John's church is not alone, but caught up in union with Jesus – disciples and Jesus will be together and honoured by the Father. The death of Jesus is not the end of the story.
- There is no 'agony in the garden' in John's Gospel, but there is this internal struggle: "Now my soul is troubled" – deep human expression of fear & temptation to avoid what is coming – John uncovers Jesus' internal dialogue – ending with: Father, glorify your name! It is a cry from the heart.

- God's response (the voice) confirms Jesus' understanding. John transforms Jesus' private agony into a public manifestation of his obedient service (JBC).
- Note the other times the 'voice' has been heard: Jesus' Baptism and at the Transfiguration'.
- "Now is judgement passed on the world" – note reversal of 'world' from object of God's love (last Sunday) to symbol of all that is opposed to God's plan. Better translation is: Now is the judgement of this world passed (on Jesus) – ie, his crucifixion.
- "Now shall the ruler of the world be cast out" – victory
- Judgement is passed and the ruler of the world cast out by the death of Jesus.
- "When I am lifted up I shall draw all to myself" – means, Jesus being lifted up in glory to the Father's right hand through being lifted up on the cross and affirms that Jesus is the only means of salvation for all.

The Lenten Context – why does the church choose this passage to reflect on for the Fifth Sunday of Lent?

- There is a link between the Gospels of Sunday 3, 4 & 5 leading us to Passion Sunday, Holy Week, Easter, and onward to Pentecost.
- 3rd Sunday Jesus is the new temple – the living presence of God.
- 4th Sunday: Jesus is true light of the world
- 5th Sunday: Jesus is salvation (life) for all
- Preparation for Passion Sunday next Sunday – sets the scene for the Passion as the glorification of Jesus and the 'hour' of salvation for the world.

Reflection

The first reading this Sunday tells us that our journey to transfiguration happens from within, by our hearts being changed. The prophet Jeremiah looks forward to a new covenant between God and his people. This covenant will not be written in stone, but in human hearts. This new covenant cannot be broken since God always forgives and never remembers our sins. It is in our hearts that we learn the truth about the strength of God's love for us and recognise ourselves as God's own people.

There is a lovely phrase in the preface of Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation I which captures this sense: *You have bound the human family to yourself through Jesus your Son, our Redeemer, with a new bond of love so tight that it can never be undone.*

The words of John's Gospel help answer the question about how this covenant is made. God's love is revealed in a weak and suffering human being through whom God offers his own life as the pledge of love and forgiveness which seals this new covenant.

When Greeks come asking to see Jesus he knows his preaching is complete and that 'the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified'.

Unless the grain of wheat dies, it remains all alone. If it dies it yields a 'rich harvest'. Jesus' death yields a rich harvest of followers with whom and in whom he is always present. We are not left to make the journey from temptation to transfiguration alone - Jesus is our constant companion. He is the way by which we get from one to the other.

Faith in (seeing) Jesus, draws us out of temptation and into transfiguration – to be the living presence of God in the world, the meeting places between human need and God's compassion, to be light and life for one another.

If we, too, 'want to see Jesus' we must look into our own hearts. It is there that God writes his law of love in the person of his Son. It is there that we discover the presence of One who loves us beyond death and who gently refashions us into the image and likeness of his Son.