

+ John 12:20-33 + The Time Has Come + 5th Sunday in Lent + 29 March 2009 +

How much time do you spend waiting? We wait in line at the store. We wait for a package to arrive. We wait for the workday to end. We wait for the school bus to arrive. We wait for the car to get fixed. We wait on the phone on hold or when we're waiting for someone to pick up. We wait and wait until the time finally arrives, when our goal is reached or our task complete.

Sometimes with all this waiting, there is a certain amount of anticipation. We wait for a baby to be born. We wait for our first day of school. We wait for our graduation or wedding day. We wait for retirement or the end of a long deployment. We wait for Christmas or Easter to come around again. With each passing day, the anticipation grows until the time of joy finally arrives.

Sometimes waiting involves a certain amount of uncertainty or fear or even dread. We wait to undergo some medical tests and then wait for the test results. We wait for a change in a loved one's health who is hospitalized. We wait for word on our job status. We wait for the economy to recover. We wait for a loved one to return from a dangerous deployment or during a bad snowstorm. With each passing moment, the stress, the fear, the uncertainty grows. Relief doesn't usually come until all is said and done.

It seems like we're always waiting and have been doing so since our first parents, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden so long ago. You see, they passed along the guilt of their sin and the death they deserved to every generation that followed. In loving mercy, however, God provided an answer—the promise of a Savior who would crush Satan's head through his own death, but for that answer they would have to wait. Nearly 4000 or so years of history passed before the right time arrived. God was guiding that history all along for the right setting to fulfill that promise, but now today, **THE TIME HAS COME!** The time has come for humiliation, for judgment and for glory. **Read John 12:20-33.**

It was the last week of Jesus' ministry. In fact, it may have even been Palm Sunday just hours after Jesus had humbly, yet triumphantly entered the city of Jerusalem on the back of the foal of a donkey. For some weeks now, Jesus had been making a long, winding, final journey up to the city for one last celebration of the Passover. He knew that while he was there, he would be betrayed, suffer tremendously, be crucified, die and be buried, and finally rise again from the dead—all by the end of that particular week.

Up until that time, especially since his public ministry began three years before, Jesus had had to remind those around him, ***"My time has not yet come"***. The timing for his rescue of the world wasn't quite right yet, but when a small group of Greek Jews inquired about seeing Jesus, he knew it was time. Jesus had come to be ***"the Light of the world"*** and the time had finally come to save the nations from their sin. Jesus announced, ***"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."***

At first glance, Jesus' words seem rather odd. He announced that the time has come for him to be glorified, but rather than talk about glory, Jesus went on about his death. That seems strange, because you don't normally think of death when you hear the word "glory", but Jesus was looking forward to the final act of his humiliation. At the same time he wasn't looking forward to the suffering and death themselves with anticipation. In fact, he said, ***"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour."***

You see, Jesus was fully human. He knew what awaited him in the week ahead—betrayal, injustice, violent ridicule, beatings, flogging, lack of sleep, crucifixion, and death. Jesus knew it was coming and he had to wait for the final hour to arrive. Jesus was no robot, but he wasn't as frail as we so often are. Jesus didn't cry out to be rescued from what he was about to endure, but he had come to endure all that to accomplish what had long been promised to our human race—deliverance from sin and death.

The time had come for Jesus' final humiliation. From the beginning, Jesus had willingly humbled himself to accomplish his goal of saving us. In mercy, he had left his heavenly throne to become the helpless baby of a lowly virgin named Mary, who was considered a social outcast in her hometown of Nazareth because of her "questionable" pregnancy. In mercy, Jesus went through the same growing process we do from infant to baby to toddler to child to tween to teen to adult, yet he lived perfectly. Willingly he lived as the adopted son of a poor carpenter in a backwater town of a backwater region of a backwater province. When his public ministry began, his humiliation continued, Jesus performed miracles, but most took place in out of the way corners of Palestine. Thousands wanted to make him king by force, but Jesus always withdrew from the crowds. Even

when he had entered Jerusalem to songs of praise, he didn't take the opportunity to seize control, but continued to the cross. Now the time had come for Jesus' final humiliation.

This humiliation has an impact on us and all who follow Jesus through faith in him. You see, through his life and death, Jesus was our Substitute. He would endure the cross and shame and suffering that we deserve for the guilt of all of our sins, but through faith in him, we too would die—to our selves. Jesus explained, ***“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. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.”***

As we heard just a couple weeks ago, to follow Jesus means denying our sinful selves, taking up our cross, and following him. Here he explains that further. If we give highest priority to what we want for this life and what we can get out of it, we will lose out on eternal life. What we have in the here and now won't last. When we are connected to Christ by believing in him, however, we have the guarantee of eternal life, of forgiveness, of heaven. That also means as Christ's servants, we follow where he leads. That means we will follow him beneath the cross even facing scorn and humiliation for his sake, but following him, we are assured of the Father's honor.

After all that waiting, the time had finally come for Jesus to face his final humiliation, but Jesus also looked ahead to judgment. ***“Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”*** What lay ahead of Jesus was going to be tremendously difficult, because he would be condemned for the sins of the world. Jesus would be forsaken by his heavenly Father because he would personally bear the guilt of the sins of the whole world. Yet there would be victory in that coming judgment.

The sinful world and ***“the prince of this world”***, who hold so much sway and control over us, would be judged as well. You see, by Christ's condemnation, Satan and the sinful world would be condemned. By the outcome of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, the world would be judged. No longer would we be servants of Satan, but servants of Christ. No longer would we be under the control of ***“the prince of this world”***, but he would be driven out through Christ's humiliation and condemnation. In fact, by his death on the cross, Jesus would actually draw us to himself.

Here we see what Jesus was really anticipating. He wasn't looking forward to being rid of us and all our perverse foolishness when all was said and done. As a true human being, he didn't look forward to humiliation and suffering and death, but he anticipated the glorious fruits that would come from all that. ***“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”***

The time had come for glory. It would be a glory hidden beneath the cross, beneath blood and bruises and rejection. It would be a glory unlike our tainted human glory, because it would selflessly bring all glory to God's saving name. In fact, even here Jesus turns his hearers' attention from himself to glorify his Father. Jesus looked forward to bringing glory to his Father through his suffering and death. He said, ***“What shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!”*** John tells us that at that moment ***“a voice came from heaven, ‘I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.’”***

All this humiliation, all this judgment, all this suffering and death would certainly bring glory to our almighty and gracious God. By his saving name, he would fulfill that long-awaited promise made long ago to Adam and Eve.

The time had come for Christ to crush the serpent's head though he himself would die. The time had come for Christ to be a blessing to the nations. The time had come for the Lord to lay the iniquity of us all on the shoulders of the Suffering Servant. The time had come for the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. The time had come for Jesus to face humiliation and judgment and condemnation for you and me and every one of us to bring glory to his Father's name. The time had come for the Savior-King to go forth and conquer sin and Satan and death for us.

The time has finally arrived and none too soon. Our long Lenten wait is just about over. In just a week we will join our voices with the crowds proclaiming, ***“Hosanna!”*** and ***“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”***, but soon we will also hear our voices join the mobs shouting ***“Crucify him! Crucify him!”*** as our sins send Christ to the cross. There, however, on the Friday we call Good, there all of our waiting will come to an end as our Savior cries out, ***“It is finished!”***, and salvation will be ours! ***“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified!”*** Amen.