



## EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

The Gospel of John Sermon Series  
Supports Session 2: If It Dies

Sermon Title: “Seeking, Serving, and Salvation” (John 12:20-33)

---

### Connection to Session 2

Jesus described His purpose using the illustration of a grain of wheat. The grain would die to bear much fruit. Jesus would do the same.

### Introduction/Opening

When a baseball team wins the world series, the home city has a parade in which the players are cheered and showered with confetti as they make their triumphal entry lifting high the trophy won by their efforts. Earlier in John 12, Jesus made His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. We celebrate this day as Palm Sunday on the Christian calendar. Making His way into Jerusalem, Jesus indicated the time had come to lay down His life for the sheep. The crowds of people hailed Jesus as King, an event that moved the Sanhedrin to accelerate their plans for His death. Jesus’s entry into Jerusalem fulfilled the Messianic prophecy from Zechariah 9:9. “Look, your King is coming to you; he is righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Jesus did not deny the implication or stop the crowd from proclaiming Him the “King of Israel.” People showered His path with palm branches as Jesus began His journey to the cross.

### Outline

1. Seeking (vv. 20-22)
  - a. Who were the Greeks? The Greeks noted in verse twenty came to the feast to worship. These were not Hellenistic Jews but those who could be classified as God-fearers. Cornelius was one prominent God-fearer (Acts 10). Brian J. Vickers gave this definition: ‘God fearer’ is used to describe the Gentiles mentioned in Acts who were drawn to the Jewish religion, perhaps for ethical and moral reasons or because they were attracted to Jewish monotheism and worship practices.”<sup>1</sup>
  - b. What was their goal? These men wanted to have an audience with Jesus. Perhaps they had been stirred by the excitement of the Triumphal Entry. Perhaps they had witnessed Jesus cleansing the Temple.
  - c. Whom did they seek for help? They came to Philip. Philip then went and told Andrew, and then both Philip and Andrew went to Jesus.

---

1. Brian J. Vickers, “God Fearer,” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary: Completely Revised, Updated and Expanded*, ed. Chad Owen Brand, Charles W. Draper, and Archie W. England (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 662.

## 2. Serving (vv. 23-30)

- a. The answer: Jesus's response did not directly address the request of the Greeks. Instead, He declared that His climactic hour had come.
- b. The application: Jesus described how a grain of wheat when planted dies alone but through its death bears much fruit. This was a pertinent application in an agricultural society. Jesus's death, like a grain or seed, would produce an abundant spiritual harvest
- c. The association: Jesus then associated His death with the principle of servanthood. This principle also applied to His followers. "The one who loves his life will lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (v. 25).
- d. The acclamation: Jesus cried out from His troubled soul. "What should I say—Father, save me from this hour? But that is why I came to this hour" (v. 27) This prayer clearly parallels the Gethsemane prayer: "*Abba*, Father! All things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 14:36). In facing the agony of the cross, Jesus cried out with a troubled soul but held an unwavering commitment to the Father's will.
- e. Jesus's next prayer was "Father, glorify your name" (John 12:28). Jesus had to die and be glorified. A voice from heaven, obviously the Father, said "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again" (v. 28). "I have glorified it" refers to Jesus's earthly ministry. "I will glorify it again" points to Jesus's death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation. Jesus heard the voice distinctly. Some in the crowd apparently did not and thought it was thunder. Others heard a voice, but the text does not indicate whether they understood what was said. Jesus told the crowd the voice was for them.

## 3. Salvation (vv. 31-33)

- a. The recognition of judgment: The "judgment of this world" (v. 31) began with the first coming of Christ and will be consummated at His Second Coming. He used the word "now" for both the judgment of the world and for the judgment of the "ruler of the world," Satan. It may have appeared as if the prince of this world was in control and that the cross was a victory for him. Instead, Jesus's death and resurrection was Satan's crushing defeat as noted in the Genesis 3:15: "I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."
- b. The reason for judgment: Jesus would be "lifted up" (v. 32), a reference to the type of death He would die. In this case, the death would be by crucifixion. Without the cross, there would neither be judgment nor salvation. His death is the only way glorification could come. F. F. Bruce commented, "His being glorified is not a reward or recompense for his crucifixion; it inheres in his crucifixion."<sup>2</sup>
- c. The result of judgment: Jesus said, "I will draw all people to myself" (v. 32). He did not say He would draw people to the cross. Instead, Jesus said He would draw all people to Himself. He referred to all people without distinction: Jews and Gentiles.

## Conclusion

The question then remains, how shall one live? Jesus gave His life so people of all classes and ethnicities could live by losing their lives for His sake. Living a selfish life will lead to misery.

---

2. F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (Glasgow, UK: Pickering and Inglis, 1983), 267.

Living a Christ-focused life will lead to joy that will be fully experienced when Christ returns. For now, all believers need to live for the One who died in their place and rose again the third day. What choice will you make today?

---

*Dr. Neil Gant is a native of Memphis and now lives in East Tennessee where he has served as Pastor of the Oakwood Baptist Church in Knoxville since March of 2019. He has served in pastoral ministry for more than forty-one years. He has been married to the former Lea Gillespie for more than forty-one years, and they have one adult daughter, Anna. He received his Bachelor of Arts from Blue Mountain College and both his Master of Divinity and Doctor of Philosophy degrees from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary.*

*All Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible<sup>®</sup>, Copyright 2020 by Holman Bible Publishers.*