

Sermon #1,259: St. John 12:28-36

4-5-17, Lent 5 Midweek, Bethany-Princeton MN

(Hymns: 283, 378.9-10, 339, 481.1.4.5; also Kingo: "As the Drops of Blood ...")

NOW TO MY FATHER I DEPART

The Text, St. John 12:28-36. ²⁸ "Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." ²⁹ Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him." ³⁰ Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³² And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." ³³ This He said, signifying by what death He would die. ³⁴ The people answered Him, "We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?" ³⁵ Then Jesus said to them, "A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. ³⁶ While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." Lord, this is Your Word and these are Your words. Sanctify us by the truth. Your Word is truth.

O merciful Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ, forgive all my transgressions and draw all that is in me after You, that I may dwell in You and You in me. May Your love be stronger in me than death, yes, stronger than all the powers of hell, that by You I may stand in the evil day and gain the victory in the hour of need and temptation. When my enemy seems nearest to me, You be still nearer and show that You are the watchman of Israel who does not slumber. Watch over me this night, that my soul, even while I sleep, may hold fast to You, that tomorrow I may rise in Your name and live to Your glory, even all the days of my life. Lord, bless me, bless us all for the sake of Your mercy. Amen. (ELH p. 171, from the Prayer for Saturday Evening)

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ:

We have heard the end of the Passion History. In the final reading tonight we heard how Jesus suffered on the cross, we felt His anxiousness at the unnatural darkness when He knew He was forsaken by God, we

heard His *"It-is-finished"* and His last triumphant cry, heard the breath go out of Him and saw the miracles at His death, the torn curtain and the earthquake and the Roman soldier declaring Him to be the Son of God.

So it is interesting to return to John 12, where it records what happened three days before all of this. If you recall, this was when some Greeks, Gentiles who were sympathetic to the Jewish religion and had come to Jerusalem for the Passover, came to the disciples and said: *"We wish to see Jesus."* That innocent request caused Jesus to say: *"The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified."* He meant that it was time for Him to die. His greatest glory would be His death. In these moments He experienced deep anguish and distress.

It leads to the opening words that we heard just now, when Jesus says: **"Father, glorify Your name."** This is spoken by Jesus in His suffering. If God is glorified in Jesus' death, and Jesus prays to the Father to glorify His name, what Jesus is really saying is: "Lead Me to the cross." It was not easy for Him to say this. He knows the darkness He was headed into.

So what the Father says in response is a comforting answer. It sounded like thunder to the crowd, which they associate with power and majesty and even a threatening display like at Mt. Sinai. But actually He speaks words, which only Jesus can hear. The Father answers: **"I have glorified it and will glorify it again."** What He means by this is that Jesus will die on the cross. The Father will lead Him to the cross.

The temptations that the devil constantly gives Jesus during His Passion - to strike back, to revile in return, to strike with the sword, to defend His innocence, to lay down His cross, to come down from the cross - all these temptations will fail. This is important for us! This is our only hope. We can read the Passion History like a drama. What will happen? What could have happened? But here, before it happens we hear God the Father saying that our salvation is sure and certain in Jesus' hands.

Even when He is forsaken by God, Jesus carries this promise with Him. Although Jesus faces and bears the wrath of God for all the sin of the world that He is bearing, God the Father's answer to His plea, **"I have glorified it and will glorify it again,"** is a promise that Jesus will fulfill His mission. He is pleasing to the Father in all of this.

All the details of Jesus' suffering and death that we have heard agree perfectly with what Jesus and the Father said before it even happened. God's promises came true. Jesus' death is God accomplishing the salvation that He promised. It is just incredible that God the Father, and Jesus Himself, speak as if it is already done before it even happens.

The Father speaks in the past tense: **"I have glorified My name"** in Jesus' death, He says, even before Judas betrays Jesus.

Then we hear Jesus say these spectacular words: **"Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself."**

These words are such a treasure. The ruler of this world is the devil. That is just awful! What can we do, living in this world where Satan is the ruler? How can this world have any hope? What hope is there for us? You aren't able to overcome the devil and his temptations. You sin every day. You do what the devil wants. He rules the world; often he rules you. So Jesus' words about casting out the devil, take that as a promise not only of what He would do in His Passion but what He will do for you.

Jesus speaks in the present tense, with absolute certainty, about His victory over the devil: **"Now ... now,"** He says. He speaks His victory over the devil before it even happens. Even when He speaks in future tense – what will happen – He speaks in just as definite terms as if it's already happened: **"Now the ruler of this world will be cast out."** You can see how it happened in the events of His Passion, and His descending to hell and rising from the dead on the third day announce this victory. But now also see that He casts out the ruler of this world, in your life. The forgiveness of sins that He won, and which He has spoken to you, casts the devil away from you. His victory comes to you!

The other thing Jesus says – **"If I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all peoples to Myself"** – is also His certain prediction about His death. He was speaking about being "lifted up" on the cross. When the Jews told Pilate that they were not allowed to put anyone to death, St. John comments at that point that it was fulfilling this statement of Jesus that He would die by being lifted up on a cross.

But the second half of this statement, about “drawing all peoples” to Him, is another great promise for you to take to yourself. “All peoples” means people of every nation. This is telling you not to doubt that you will be saved and that you will make it to the end believing in Him.

This is one of the strongest temptations of the devil to get you to doubt your own salvation. But Jesus draws you to His cross. You have only to be asked: “Do you believe that Jesus died for you?” And the answer that you give, a simple “Yes,” is your salvation! He preserves this faith in you by having you see Jesus your Savior, Jesus dying for you.

This great scene in John 12 is one of my favorites because – coming before His Passion – it shows that His suffering and death are not a defeat at all. It is His victory, a victory for you. So it is your victory too. From His death you draw your life. When He says, “*Now to My Father I depart,*” it is to bring you with Him. In this He is glorified! Amen!