



# SERMONS AT SAINT MARK'S

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HOLY TUESDAY, YEAR B, MARCH 26, 2024

ISAIAH 49:1-7; PSALM 71:1-14; 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-31; JOHN 12:2--36

## HOLY TUESDAY: HEALING AND WHOLENESS

**John 12:20-36** [*Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor. "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say-- 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. The crowd answered him, "We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" Jesus said to them, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light." After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them.]*

*Sir, we wish to see Jesus!*

Isn't that a desire we all have in some way?! Earnest, humble, searching. Even as relative outsiders the Greeks see something special in Jesus and yearn for it.

But then Jesus, in usual fashion, responds with a non-sequitur. Unless a seed falls to the earth and dies, it will not bear fruit.

Do you remember in grade school planting the bean in a solo cup of soil, watering it, and watching, waiting for the sprout to come?

We all know this earthy reference, and yet the remarkable paradox to which Jesus calls our attention, is not so much the grain or bean, but that here in Holy Week, we are reminded once more that it is in giving over of oneself that we find the riches of God's grace in our lives more abundantly.

Following Jesus is, from first to last, about letting go of all the ways we try

to build ourselves up (the seed will never sprout unless it lets go).

It may seem odd that we even speak of glory in this week that holds so much suffering and pain. We cannot experience the glory of God (of Christ) as long as we are concerned with our own glory.

I remember growing up in Sunday School, and they handed out attendance awards each May. Cross and Crown awards they called them. Medals to be pinned on one's chest as a badge of honor. Glory. The worldly method missed the point.

Glory is a gift shared by God, it's about taking on the shekinah of God, the emanating presence of God, which changes us for good, and only seems to occur when we are not seeking our own glory. Jesus knew this intuitively and modeled it for us at every turn.

The seed will never sprout unless it lets go. The theological term for this is

kenosis: self-emptying, not in a pious way, but in a humble, heart-felt way. It is not simply self-effacing, but neither is it self-destructive, or devaluing one's belovedness. It is the spiritual practice that enables one to let go of this world's measures of success. The paradoxical gift: healing often happens in the experience of letting go.

What are you being invited to let go of this week, as we make our way to the cross?

This service is characterized as a healing Eucharist, explicitly so because we offer the sacramental rite of Anointing with oil. It is simply olive oil blessed for a purpose, to be healing balm bestowed in prayerful action: an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace given by God.

In a few moments we will make our prayer: *Heal us, O God.* And our litany is: *Hear and have mercy, O God.*

Mercy is an attribute of God—*chesed*, womblike love. We are invited to bring what is on our hearts to the merciful God.

In hospice care, we often talk about the difference between healing and cure. Lots of people at the end of life are healed: by forgiveness, by reconciliation, by blessings given and received, by kenosis (letting go)...

None of us are cured of our humanity and our brokenness, but we bring it all to God, to Jesus. Our word for healing arises from Middle English, *haelen*. It means to be made whole. The Latin word with the same meaning is *salvus*, from which we get salvation.

Sir, we wish to see Jesus. We wished to be healed. Give us the salve of life this night.



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