

John 12:24

Introduction

John 12 begins with the anointing of Jesus by Mary at Bethany, followed by His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Then there is an account of Greeks seeking Jesus. They go to Philip and ask, **Sir, we would like to see Jesus** (John 12:21). The Lord goes on to speak of His coming death. His death is absolutely essential if salvation and life is to come. Going to consider how His death is essential to life. Then apply it to our own lives.

The death of Jesus

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified (John 12:23). The term “Son of Man” was used in Daniel 7 for the divine being who brings God’s kingdom to men. Jesus used the term to indicate He is God’s promised Messiah through whom men could enter God’s kingdom through His death, resurrection and glorious return.

Here He says He is to be glorified. This is a reference to His own death on the Cross. What a striking word, “glorified”. He is saying His death would be the means whereby glory would come to Him. We do not usually think of crucifixion as glory. Indeed it was a most shameful death, reserved for the dregs of society, criminals and slaves. It conjures up a picture of shame and degradation and brutality. But it was really His glory - the most wonderful and marvellous thing He ever did. Through His death, God’s work of saving sinners was accomplished. Bringing lost race to Himself.

*“See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down.
Did e’er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown.”*

I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds (John 12:24). As a result, fruit or many seeds came to being. A mighty harvest resulted from the death of Christ. **A great multitude which no one could number, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb’** (Revelation 7:9,10).

But for the Cross, there would be no redemption, no heaven, and no great number of the redeemed which no man can number. It will not be till we are in heaven that we will realize the vastness of the number of the redeemed, and how great was the mighty achievement of the Cross. It all depended on the grain of wheat falling into the ground and dying. If there was no Cross, Christ would have been alone. It was only through His death we can come into fellowship with Him, for He brought life to countless millions. Thus, the Cross resulted in His glory, and in the redemption of millions. Basic principle – death brings life and fruitfulness and abundance.

Extension of this principle to the life of the believer

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 (John 12:25). Remember the basic principle – that death brings life and fruitfulness. This is true in redemption, through the death of Christ, as it is in horticulture and gardening. We buy seeds and seed potatoes. If we keep them in the packet or bag they remain alone. Nothing happens. But if we take them out of the packet, place in the dark earth, let them die, the result in a few months will be flowers, peas, lettuce, potatoes. No death – no harvest. It is the death of the seed that brings life and fruit.

This basic principle is also true in Christian life and service. If we genuinely want to live as Christians, doing effective service for the Lord, Christ has to be formed in us and allowed to use us – but first a death must occur. We have to attend our own funeral and let self-confidence, self will, self-sufficiency die with Christ on the Cross that He may be our life and be all in all to us. You – self – have got to die. If you refuse, your Christian life will be barren, fruitless and ineffective. Many Christians' lives are exactly that because they are not willing to die. Discipleship means **denying self**, saying no to self, turning back on self, rejecting self, **and taking up the cross and following Christ** (Mark 8:34). **Our old self was crucified with Christ** (Romans 6:6). **I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me** (Galatians 2:20). **Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature** (Galatians 5:24). Not only did Christ die for me, but also I died with Him.

Who is this “I” who has to be denied and crucified? The effect of the new birth is the implantation of new life, but the old nature remains and it has to be dealt with else there is no growth, no fruit, no holiness. At the root of our lives before conversion was self. Here is the root of the problem of sin. Sin – doing what I want. At the centre and core of personality is “I”, “me”, and “myself”, enthroned and ruling. From that, all sin, inward and outward, flows. My desires, lusts, my will, my way must be gratified. Produces different results in different people – worldliness, immorality or basic self-centredness under religious exterior.

Centre of being is self, and not God. We may be thoroughly nice and respectable and religious, but at the bottom we do what we want, assert self, pity self, proud of own righteousness, self is the most important thing in the world, we depend on self, concerned to glorify self, anxious to be known and fully recognised, prickly and self-protective, our reputation and other's applause means so much to us.

This self remains in the believer side by side with the Holy Spirit in the new nature. Hence the civil war we all know about. Self wants to stay alive. The last thing to be destroyed in the believer is self. It dies hard. We are inclined to make any concessions as long as it can live. The real problem with our lives is not a gift that we have been unfortunate enough to miss, but a death we are unwilling to die. “I am my own worst enemy” (Moody). There will be no fruit in genuine Christian living and effective service till we are prepared to die. Meanwhile, our life does not really count for God. We remain a single seed, because we have not died.

Before any real movement in life, and a definite change, self has to submit to a very painful, costly death. This is too high a price for some, who are only happy to let the

Lord have bits and pieces. This piecemeal arrangement does not work. We may have life, but not abundant life, till we are prepared to die. There must be total death for us to have total life.

God's answer was the Cross of His Son. He took our sins, and He took us. We are one with Him in His death, and raised with Him in His resurrection. He bore our sins and our sinful self. He died for me and I died with Him in the purposes and intentions of God. Have to consent to that. Appropriate by faith, enter into Christ's death, and I have to die. It does not take great effort – the power of the Gospel enables us to do this. Not effort, but faith. When self consents to die with Christ's death, we are raised to fullness of life in Christ's resurrection. Our life is filled with Christ's risen life. When Christ controls us and pours His risen life in, things are bound to be different. Much fruit, or "many seeds", is produced. Picture of heavily laden branches. We have life at a different level, though not arrived at perfection.

The Christian life is not about our achievements, but about the results of Christ's unrestricted power within. He brings joy and peace because the struggle between the uncrucified self and the Lord is over. When we are at an end of self, God can really begin to work. He can work often in surprising ways in the circumstances and problems and places He has put us in. When people are taken over completely by the Lord, changes in the church begin to happen. Not the result of our stirring or manipulating, but God's power at work in and through us.

The Christian life is not our unaided imitation, but Christ's life working, filling and controlling us. We cooperate and respond to Him in obedience. The result is much fruit, branches heavily laden, stalks full of ears of corn. Not struggling towards victory but standing in and enjoying victory already won. Alive to God, and fully conscious of Him in our lives.

Full commitment is not the end. The act must lead to attitude. As we spend time in His Word, we become aware of new things to be surrendered and new challenges to face. As we respond, so we grow and grow. Days of standing still and going round and round in circles are over. God's call is to total surrender. Then a daily surrender of all I am and all I have. Self to remain daily on the Cross, where God has put it.

George Muller's secret: "There was a day when I died. I died to George Muller, his desires and preferences and opinions and will. I died to the world, its approval or blame. I died to the approval or blame even of brethren and friends. And since then I have studied only to show self approved unto God."

Conclusion

This passage has a word to Christians who are not where they should be, who are in despair because things are not right. Self has to be fully dead if we are to know the fullness of life and God at work in the life. It is costly. Where is the hold up? What is it you are clinging on to and need to let go to be fully blessed?

The choice you have before you is to carry on as you are, or to leave self, with all his plans, longings, abilities and possessions, at the foot of the Cross. Come under new management. Come to an end of self. Have done with fighting against God and

arguing with Him. **But if it dies** – the key words from our text – the key to quality and effectiveness and peace in the Christian life.