

John 12:20-33
Glory!
Sunday March 21st, 2021

Today we continue our Lenten journey with Jesus to the cross. The Lenten lectionary verses trace the footsteps of Jesus to the cross and today's verses record the event that led directly to Jesus' glorification, his crucifixion on the cross.

As a child I was fascinated by magnets. I was amazed at their invisible power to attract things. I learned about their polarity, how opposites attract and likes repel. I collected magnets. I bought magnets, the bigger the better. I tore electric motors apart to get their magnets. And I made magnets from nails wrapped in copper wire.



One of the things that fascinated me most was dragging magnets through the dirt and watching them capture iron filings that if left on the magnet long enough would also become magnetic and draw even more iron filings from the soil.

Today, I would submit to you, that you are here because you have been drawn here by glory of Jesus Christ. You have been drawn here by the prevenient grace of God working through the power of the Holy Spirit and the invitation of others.

Some joining us here and online have come directly at the behest of Jesus Christ. They are our guests who found us online or by driving by and seeing our sign. An evangelist I know spoke to me about how Muslims he works with in the Mideast have been coming to Jesus, because Jesus has appeared to them in their dreams.

But most have joined us because another Christian has been so magnetized by Jesus, and has been so inspired by the Holy Spirit that they

drew you here through their love of God. Their invitation was all but irresistible.

Today, we are speaking about being **“Drawn to Jesus by the glory of the cross.”** We are talking about the magnetic event of Jesus’ passion and death that **“draws all people to him.”** As Jesus said in vs. 32, **“I, when I am lifted up from the earth will draw all people to myself.”**

There is a magnetic drawing power in the love of God demonstrated in Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross that draws all people to him.

I want to run through our scripture today so that we can understand it and apply to our lives.

In verse 20 some Greeks come to Andrew and Philip and ask to **“see Jesus”**. They ask in the sense of how disciples would request to follow a Rabbi. They ask in the way that Andrew was invited by Jesus **“to come and see”**. In other words, follow Jesus. Philip went to Andrew and then the both of them went to Jesus with the request, which upon first read, engenders what seems to be an unrelated response from Jesus. **“The hour has now come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”**

The Pharisees in the previous verse that was not read today had made an unwitting prophecy. After Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead and entered Jerusalem in triumph the Jewish leaders said, **“See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!”**

The Greeks that came to see Jesus were the representatives of the whole world that were now being drawn to Jesus. Their arrival triggered the crucifixion of Jesus, which is why his response, **“The hour has now come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”**

Next Jesus gives a short parable about how a seed when it is planted, **“dies”**. It is only then that it bears much fruit.

The direct meaning of this parable is that Jesus’ death, his glorification brings into existence the Church. The **“fruit”** or **“seeds”** are the believers

who are drawn to God through Jesus' death. You are here today because someone died. The death of Jesus brought you here.

There was a Sunday School teacher who was trying to get his class of 4th graders to understand that it was Jesus' death on the cross that grants eternal life, so he asked the kids.

"If you're good to your brothers and sisters will that get you into heaven?" Hands shot up with some saying "yes" and some "no". He finally said, "no".

"If you are good to your Mom and Dad will that get you into heaven?" Again, hands eagerly shot up and some said, "yes" and some "no" and finally he said "No".

Then he asked, "If you give all your money away to the church and the poor will that get you into heaven?" Fewer hands went up, but one really eager boy who hadn't been called on couldn't stand it anymore, so he jumped up and blurted out, "To get into heaven you gotta be dead!"

As Jesus said, **"Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life."**

And what Jesus was saying for himself was, "for me and everyone else to be drawn into heaven I gotta be dead!" I have to die." Jesus' death was his glory and as we die ie, give ourselves in love and service to others we too enter Jesus' glory. In fact, Jesus says, **"My Father will honor the one who serves me."** And who is Jesus today? The least of these, the lost, the lonely, the isolated, the hungry, the thirsty, the naked and those in prison.

The moment that the world and the devil thought they had triumphed over God through the murder of Jesus, that moment was actually the moment of their defeat and the power of the devil was broken. As our Hebrews verse reminds us, **"he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him..." as he obeyed God and was obedient unto death on a cross.**

In verse 32 Jesus says, “when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself.” This is an offer of universal salvation. Universal in that salvation is open to all,... but it is only those that chose to believe who will be saved. The love of God in Christ is drawing us to God. We need to let go of the things in this world that are holding us back.

This is a call to let go of the things in life that separate us from God and each other. It is a call to forgiveness, letting go of hurts and pains and even physical things and desires that keep you from being drawn to Jesus, and his people, the Church that was created by his sacrifice for our sin.

The Church is the creation of Christ through his glorification on the cross. It is both the power and purpose of the Church to invite others in. It is your power and purpose as the members, the arms and legs and voices of the Church to invite others in.

My friends can you grasp this in the depths of your being? Vista Church and the church universal is made up of all who believe and is the fruit of Jesus’ death. We exist and love one another because another had to die.

You can explain Jesus’ death as a payment for our sin and by this we have been **redeemed** from the power sin, death and the devil. You can explain it as a blood sacrifice, as an **atonement** for sin. You can explain it as God showing us the horrible moral consequences of our sin. Our sins killed Jesus. However, you explain it, and understand it, someone had to die to bring us together and grant us eternal life.

It is now our place to join Jesus in his work of “drawing all people to him.” In such work God will honor us. We need to invite others in.

We as Vista Church as most of the church around the world have been buried in the ground like a seed for the last year. Easter is coming, the day of resurrection; so, get ready to spring forth and fulfill the mission and purpose God has for us.

Some good news this last week. Over 1.6 million Arizonans have been vaccinated as of Wednesday. 50% of Pinal County, about 400k in Pima. Soon Pima county will hit 50% too. By the end of May almost everyone who wants vaccinated will get vaccinated. In person school began last week and this week for most kids in Tucson.

So, we need to get ready to invite others in so that when we can, we will be ready to throw the doors wide open. There are many who have been isolated, locked in, locked down and need and want to get out and hear about the Love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. You are that voice and arm and person to invite the People of Peace in your lives to join us here in person and livestream.

We are getting ready. Dr. Bill is working to reengage our mission in San Manuel. Our Fellowship Group is working on events now and in the future that we can invite people to. Our Christian Education group is planning new studies and groups. Even our UMM have been giving out flyers with the rummage this week inviting people in.

About 50% of non-church attenders say they would attend if someone would invite them in. Some say it's only about 1 in 7 who would respond, but the point is there are lots of people out there looking for a relationship with God, and will only find one if you invite them in.

In vs. 28-29 Jesus said, **“Father glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it and will glorify it again.**

The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; other said an angel had spoken to him.” To be absolutely clear, Jesus' glorification was his crucifixion on the cross. In his death he defeated sin, death, and the devil. In his death he overcame the sin of the original man by demonstrating absolute obedience to God even unto death, death on a cross!

At the right and proper moment, the Kairos moment, God spoke, God broke into our human sphere to reveal himself and his glory through his Son. It is important to note that some only heard thunder, but others realized that God spoke. When we invite people to be drawn to Jesus as he was lifted up

on the cross, some will only hear a loud noise. Others will hear the very voice of God and respond.

Here is how it works. This week we lost another saint of our church Dr. Jane Stump. She was very involved here after joining and attending only a very short time. She was the driving figure behind our “Joy Choir”. This is a choir for people who have Alzheimer’s or dementia. She understood how deeply imbedded music was in our minds and how that music could be brought out no matter how bad the short-term memory.

She was an acquaintance of Joyce Holman. They knew each other from a political club they were a part of and then were separated for several years. One day they ran into each other in the coffee aisle at Fry’s Food Store. Joyce invited Jane to attend church with her and her husband Jim. Joyce talked about how good the worship was and particularly about the choir, and that the choir was going to have a huge Palm Sunday Cantata complete with an orchestra.

Joyce invited Jane to meet her in front of the church on Sunday and then sit with them through worship. Jane did this and kept coming back and coming back and absolutely loved that Palm Sunday Cantata. Jane soon joined and then was inspired by the thought of starting a choir for those with Alzheimer’s and dementia. The rest is history as they say.

I want to point out a few things here. Jane was a Person of Peace for Joyce. The Holy Spirit had prepared her heart and mind to be open to the invitation. At the right and proper time, God’s time, God’s Kairos moment, she was invited and responded.

Now the invitation and what drew her to Vista Church was not only Joyce’s invitation but the excellent choir and music program here. Drawing people to Christ is a team sport not an individual competition. Jesus’ reference to “Producing many seeds” or “fruit” was a direct reference to the church. We are in this together. We draw people to Christ together.



Remember the illustration I began with of dragging the magnet through the dirt how it collects iron filings and then they become magnetized and draw more iron filings to them? That is what it is like to be a part of the church. Individually we can invite others to Christ, but it is together that we can powerfully draw them.

This stresses the need for all of us, as we can to be involved and present, to be involved and present in whatever activity it is that draws us to Christ here. Even at our men's rummage sale people have been invited to worship here at Vista Church with small flyers going out in the bags of those who purchase items. After many of our rummage sales we have gained members.

Your presence matters for yourself and for others!

We have Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter coming up. If possible be present yourself. If possible, invite someone to come with you. These are not ideal circumstances under which to invite someone to worship with us having limited capacity and having to preregister. But we are here. The Holy Spirit is here, and we are lifting up the glory of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Very practically, for Easter we have 2 services. The one at 7am is outdoors on the Patio stretching Eastward. We have a lot of capacity there. Sunday at 10am is another matter. I believe we can safely expand our capacity and we are looking at how to do that. We are limited to 25% of capacity which is 92. We might be able to push that up to 33%, or 121.

But nevertheless, if we fill up online make sure you worship with us Livestream on Easter, the day in which we celebrate Jesus' total triumph over sin, death and the devil.

Indeed, what is God Saying to you and who are you going to Draw to Christ? Amen.