

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Ever since His transfiguration on a mt. in Galilee, Jesus' had been focused on getting to Jerusalem. He had told His disciples, multiple times, that He was going there to suffer and to die.

In fact, we heard in what detail He told them these things in the appointed Gospel for today:

"He will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon.

And after flogging Him, they will kill Him, and on the third day He will rise."

And we're also told what their initial response was: **they understood none of these things.**

This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

In our text for mediation this morning, we see part of what was so difficult for them, because, in truth, it is difficult for us, too.

As follows in Jesus' name:

And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there will My servant be also. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

"Now is My soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose 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 that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not Mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself." He said this to show by what kind of death He was going to die. So the crowd answered Him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can You say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" So Jesus said to them, "The Light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the Light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the Light, believe in the Light, that you may become sons of Light." (ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

Again, Jesus was foretelling His death, even by crucifixion,

both in parable form with the grain of wheat falling into the earth and dying, (as in on a cross)

as well as using the common terminology of the day, **"the Son of Man must be lifted up."**

And it is here that we understand what was so difficult for those at that time to grasp:

The crowd answered Him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever.

How can You say that the Son of Man must be lifted up?

Who is this Son of Man?"

They didn't understand, because they had been only partially catechized,

with a focus on what man considers to be glorious, that the Messiah would **remain forever**, (or in our liturgical and catechetical language: that He would *live and reign to all eternity*).

Those OT prophecies of the Son of David to sit on David's throne forever sounded glorious to them, and they envisioned just such a kingdom, one of political power & influence over the whole world.

—It really was a selfish idea of glory, where their nation would dominate and have that worldly glory.

But as Jesus had told His disciples outside of Jericho,

“everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.”

This included what Moses in the Law had written about the serpent to **“bruise His heel,”**^{Genesis 3:15}

and what Isaiah has said, **“yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.”**^{Isaiah 53:4}

This did not sound glorious to them.

Death is not glorious. The dead king is not the victorious king, but the defeated one.

And crucifixion is not a glorious death — they had seen what crucified bodies truly look like.

The images in their mind of such an execution are not the romanticized, still-lives that we see today.

They had heard the moaning and the writhing in pain of those who suffered it.

And its not like one ceremoniously and victoriously goes and nails himself to the cross,

but it is done to you, by cruel and hardened soldiers whose job it is to humiliate and kill you.

Maybe this will help us understand why this was so difficult for the people at that time to understand.

A “victorious death” sounded like an oxymoron to them, like a complete contradiction,

because the dead person remains dead, and can't *live and reign to all eternity*.

And yet, this is what Jesus was saying was going to be the hour in which He was glorified.

Truly perplexing to them, or at least to those who cared, rather than who were mocking Him.

It is their last question that they (and we) really needed to focus their/our meditation on.

That would have helped them tremendously in their understanding: **“Who is this Son of Man?”**

I don't think they were asking, “What is His name? Which person is He?”

This was more of a “What is this guy made of that He can endure crucifixion AND **remain forever?**” kind of question.

Or at least, that should have been the question.

Of course, we have the benefit of St. John's Gospel, the point of which is to tell us who He is.

And John has done that from the very beginning, **“In the beginning was the Word,**

and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh...”^{John 1:1,14}

And as we hear in our text, the Son of Man is also the Son of God, as He prays to His Father:

“Father, save Me [or deliver Me] from this hour... Father, glorify Your name.”

Of course, St. John isn't just telling us who Jesus is, but also what He has done for us.

And it is that element that explains how Jesus can talk about His inglorious death as His true glory.

But let's not fool ourselves and think that Jesus' victory march to the cross was not traumatic for Him.

It was a great burden as this Man bears the sins and burdens of the whole world.

Hear Him as He admits, **“Now is My soul troubled.”**

Remember, **all the prophecies were to be accomplished.**

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; ...

But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities;

upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed.

...The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. ^{Isaiah 53:4-6}

Jesus' death on the cross was not His hour of glorification just because He, the Son of God, died.

It is His glory because by it, He, the almighty and just God has shown us His infinite mercy.

Though you deserved His eternal wrath and punishment, He endured it for you,

so that instead of eternal death, you might have eternal life.

But while the world has been redeemed, has been fully ransomed with the holy blood of God, there is still what Jesus called the **“judgment of this world.”**

He said, **“Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.**

And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself.”

The word translated here as “judgment” is actually the word from which we get the word “crisis.”

It originally had the connotation, not simply of a tragedy, like it does today,

but the idea of a turning point, at which something might either get better or worse.

And that is how it is used here.

There is a turning point, the **“ruler of this world” has been cast out.**

He has been cast out of heaven and no longer stands before the Father to accuse you.

And instead, Jesus draws **all people**, including you, **to Himself!**

That is incredibly good news because instead of an accuser standing before God’s throne, you now have an Advocate, the glorified, crucified and risen Son of Man.

But it could also go worse.

While this salvation is free and on display for all people, it can also be rejected.

St. John spoke to this early in chapter 3, when Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus.

Even then, Jesus was speaking of His crucifixion.

He said, **as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.**

There were those who refused to look at that bronze serpent.

They refused to believe the Word of God which promised them healing & life simply by looking at it.

Their time of judgment came: instead of receiving the merciful gifts promised, they received the just wages of their unbelief and sin.

Dear Fellow Redeemed

The grain of wheat has fallen into the earth and died, and yet, just as Jesus said it would,

He lives and has borne abundant fruit.

Having been lifted up **as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,**

He has drawn all people to Himself and in mercy has made you a child of the Light.

Like the beggar who had previously been blind,

we pray to the Son of David and to the Son of God for His mercy — that we might see and believe.

And He answers your prayer, for Jesus has been presented to you as the eternal & enfleshed God.

Now may you serve and follow Him, not **loving your life in this world**, and so losing eternal life, but following Him... and seeking Him... and being where He is found.

Look for where He washes you in His holy blood through the water of Holy Baptism.

Look for where He feeds you with His body and satiates you with His blood in the Lord’s Supper.

Look with those eyes of faith for the true glory of God found only in Jesus’ cross of forgiveness where He is lifted up to draw all people to Himself,

and by which *He lives and reigns to all eternity* as your merciful and glorified, crucified and risen Lord.

In Jesus’ name. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria