

THE KERNEL OF WHEAT

John 12:20-36
Key Verse: 12:24

#34

The Pharisees were dismayed at the crowd's response to Jesus. They uttered prophetic words: "Look how the whole world has gone after him." It is true. The whole world is drawn to Jesus. All the people of the world long for love. All the people of the world need forgiveness. God so loved the whole world that he sent his Son. God wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1Ti 2:4). Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Once, some Samaritans who heard him teach confessed, "We know that he is the Savior of the world" (Jn 4). In verse 32 Jesus said, "I, when I am lifted up from the earth will draw all men to myself." (32) Now, some Greeks, representatives of the Gentile world, came to Philip, the man of reason. They asked to see Jesus. Philip went to his coworker, Andrew, a man of child-like faith. Together they came to Jesus. Jesus' answer is for the Jews who seek miracles, for the Greeks who seek wisdom and for disciples—both men of reason and men of heart. It is for all the people of the world who want to know Jesus. He said, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." This meant that the time had come for Jesus to die on the cross for the sins of the world and be raised to life by the power of God. Then Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." A seed has in it the potential of life and growth. But until the seed is buried in the ground, that potential is dormant. If it is never planted, but only remains in a storehouse, it never grows; it produces nothing. But if it is planted in the ground, it takes root; it bursts out of its shell, and as a seed, dies. But from this seed, a new life sprouts and pushes its way through the soil and becomes a plant that produces many seeds. The seed does not come to life unless it dies. Jesus did not shrink back from the cross. He would die in obedience to the Father's will, rise and bear fruit. One man's act of righteousness would bring forgiveness and life for all men. (Ro 5:18) Jesus died for me. He died for you. When I repent of my sins and accept Jesus' blood shed for me, and believe his resurrection in my heart, I have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. I am born again into God's kingdom. God's kingdom is born in my heart.

Jesus continued, explaining the principle of the kernel of wheat. He said, "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. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant will also be. My Father will honor the one who serves me." Jesus blesses and honors a sacrificial life when that life is offered in obedience to God's word, for Jesus' sake and for God's glory.

In this case, to love one's life means to cling to one's life in this world. People of the world work hard for their future security; they work hard to buy many toys; they seek ways to make life easy and convenient; they work hard and play hard and try to avoid suffering and have as much fun as possible. They cling desperately to life in a perishing

world. The Bible says, “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.” (1Jn 2:15-17) One who loves his life will lose it, but the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Recently, four American missionaries in Iraq were gunned down by terrorists. They were there to show the love of Christ by helping needy people. They knew that their work was dangerous. They are like kernels of wheat. Our UBF missionaries and shepherds around the world are precious heroes and heroines of faith. They love Jesus and seek to follow, living like kernels of wheat. In Chicago, Shep Joseph and Charisma Magno of Triton UBF made a decision to obey Jesus’ world mission command and to go to Nigeria with their two cute children. It is not a small sacrifice. When M Peter and Monica Park made a decision to move from the Embassy compound in Nigeria and live nearer the university, where students live it was not easy for their family. God has blessed their sacrifice with a fruitful ministry. M. Andrew and Hope Kim planned to leave Sudan when the Embassy closed. But they are still there, boldly preaching the gospel in a Muslim country and engaged in disciple making. God has made their ministry fruitful. In Hong Kong, there is M. Angela Kim who offered her human sorrow, her health, her future to God. Her sacrificial life gave birth to the Hong Kong UBF. I heard that even after dangerous brain surgery she is again living the common life with students. M David and Pauline Byun teach Bible to students in the Muslim world. It is a life-threatening environment. They are full of joy and God has given fruit. In Sri Lanka, there has been an outbreak of persecution of Christians by Buddhists. M. Barnabas Baek writes, “I was discouraged by the wholesale persecution and scattering of our sheep. 105 Christian Churches were attacked and burned and many Christian workers were threatened with death...but I am not disobedient to the heavenly vision... I cannot put confidence in myself...we visit the campus once every week and continue to help several sheep with one to one Bible study....I have a dream that the morning and evening chant of Buddhist scriptures from the temple will be replaced by hymns of praise to God.”

Missionaries and shepherds around the world are people who have decided to live for Jesus, challenging the way of the world. In a world in which selfishness is a virtue and everyone seems to be working to achieve worldly success, those who follow Jesus in a life of unselfish sacrifice seem to be foolish, but they are kernels of wheat whom God has planted in the soil of the world. As Jesus accepted one woman’s love poured out like expensive perfume, so God will accept and bless lives offered to him in unselfish sacrifice. Jesus said, “the man who loves his life in this world will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.”

Fourth, when I am Lifted Up (27-36)

Jesus prayed. He struggled. He did not pray to be rescued from the hands of his enemies. He prayed that when the hour of trial came he might glorify God. "What shall I say, "Father, save me from this hour? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Jesus' whole life was a life lived for the glory of God. One who loves God and obeys his word glorifies God. Jesus said, "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up will draw all men to myself." (31,32) Now, Jesus would be lifted up on the cross. Through his excruciating death he would purchase men for God. He would drive out the prince of this world. And people from every tribe and tongue and nation from every part of this world would be drawn to him.

The Roman empire was great. It looked as if it would last forever. But it perished. Genghis Khan conquered the world by the power of the sword. His empire is the largest one in the history of the world—far larger than the Roman empire. But his kingdom could not last forever. Jesus conquered by the power of love. He defeated mankind's greatest enemies—sin and death. His kingdom is forever. He has called us to follow him and serve him. He promised that we, his disciples, will be with him where he is, and that the Father will honor the one who serves him. His invitation to all people of the world is to come out of darkness and walk in the light. He is the light of the world. Whoever follows him will not walk in darkness but have the light of life.

Our Father God has a heart for the whole world. Jesus, the kernel of wheat was lifted up on the cross to drive out the Prince of this world. Let us come to Jesus who poured out his life for the world. Praise Jesus who was lifted up on the cross. Praise Jesus the king who drives out the Prince of this world. He invites us to follow him. "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, my servant will also be." Jesus is the kernel of wheat. His way to kingship is the way of the cross, the way of the kernel of wheat. He invites us to follow him. He invites us to become kernels of wheat to bring his life to the world.