

## John 12:20-27 | Deciding to Follow Jesus

Communion Sunday.

Advent #2.

Statement to church on Lazarus sermon.

### Pastoral Prayer.

**John 12:20-27** 'Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, "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."

"He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal."

"If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him."

In this passage, the Greeks are seeking Jesus. An illustration of even more of **'the whole world'** coming to Him.

**The Greeks** could be Jewish converts, but it is less likely. More likely than not, they are Greeks of the surrounding nations that have a respect for the Jewish tradition for its high morality in like of the Greco-Roman world and they have an amazement of Jesus for the works that He has been doing.

**'believe in Me for the works.'** John 10:38

These Greeks pursue Jesus' disciples Andrew and Philip, obviously apprehensive about coming directly to Christ.

In this setting Jesus makes a direct statement about His crucifixion. Then He gives a principled explanation about the crucifixion and then two conditional statements about those who are His disciples.

These conditional statements follow the pattern of **'if this, then this.'**

If you love this life, Then you will lose it. If you hate this life, then the result will be that you keep it for eternal life.

If anyone serves Me, THEN he will follow Me.  
If anyone serves Me, THEN my Father will honor him.

These conditional statements give us a reality of the Christian life. These conditional statements set an expectation of being a disciple.

But it does need explanation; What does it mean to hate your life? Why is loving your life a problem?

If anyone serves Me, THEN he will follow Me – Where is Christ going and what would we be following Him in?

We see these types of **dualistic, conditional statements** throughout the Gospel of John.

Dualism marks all of John's Gospel: life and death, light and darkness, love and hate, from above and from below.

### **Life and death.**

John 1:4 'in Him was life, and the life was the light of men'

John 3:15 'whoever believes in Him has eternal life'

John 3:36 'whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God remains on him'

John 4:14 'whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.'

John 5:24 'whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.'

John 5:29 'those who have done good will be raised to a resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.'

John 6:27 'work for food that endures to eternal life'

John 8:51 'truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.'

John 11:4 'this illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it'

John 11:25 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live'

The Gospel is telling us this back and forth, dualism, of life and death. That Jesus Christ is Life.

### **Light and darkness.**

John 1:5 'the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome/comprehended it'

John 8:12 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me/Jesus will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life'

In Luke 11:35 Christ states 'Be careful, lest the light in you be darkness'

Watch that you do not love this life.

John the Baptist came for the purpose that he would 'bear witness about the light'

John 3:19 'this is the judgment that the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works/deeds were evil.'

John 3:20 'everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.'

Here in this passage **the Greeks are apprehensive**. They are not certain about approaching Jesus. They wonder, **will their deeds be exposed? Will they be accepted? Can they come to Christ given the lifestyle** that they have lived?

**What does Jesus do to assuage their concerns?** He gives them a conditional statement about life and service.

John 3:21 'whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.'

You even see this **conditional statement here**; **IF your works/deeds are true, THEN they** will be done in the open and not covered up. **IF** you are doing the works of GOD, **THEN** it will be done in the Light so that it will be clearly understood.

John 8:12 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness'

IF you follow Christ, THEN you do not walk in darkness.

John 12:35 Jesus says '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.'

John 12:36 'You have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of lights'

IF you have the light, THEN believe in the light, and THE RESULT will be that you are a son of the light.'

**From above and from below.**

John 3:31 'He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all.'

John 8:23 'You are from below, I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world'

John 19:11 'You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.'

All authority comes from God. Look at **Isaiah 45:7**. God raises up Cyrus as a tool of His authoritative power.

We see these repeated conditional statements throughout the Gospel. **It is always either/or, if/then, this or that.** In other words Jesus is making it clear, that there are no two ways about it.

To put it theologically, it is dogmatic. A dogmatic belief is an absolute belief.

This statement that Jesus is making to the Greeks is a conditional statement, its authoritative, and its absolute. But it's also hopeful. It puts all disciples on the same playing field.

It has to be this way for the claims that Jesus is making. The claims that Jesus is making are so dramatic that you find yourself on one of the two-sides and there is no middle ground.

Looking at the Greeks who seek Him, Jesus says nothing with regard to this background.

Jesus doesn't highlight that they have engaged in pagan worship. Jesus doesn't highlight any particular immorality among them.

**What does Jesus do?** He makes a direct statement about His crucifixion. And then He gives a conditional statement of anyone that would be His disciple.

**Instead of answering a surface question,** Jesus gets to the heart of the matter. Jesus states, if you're looking for me, if you're wondering about Me, then you will follow Me.

If you intend to follow Me, then you will be where I am. And the results of being where Christ is, is that you will hate this life.

I want to be clear about this, Jesus is **not giving a condition for us to be morbid and fatalistic.**

Jesus is **not endorsing a downcast attitude.**

**The reality of knowing Jesus is a reality of love, and peace, and joy.**

**In John 15 Jesus tells us to remain in the vine so that we would remain in His love and in doing that our joy would be made complete.**

**'You will have trouble in this world but take heart, I have overcome this world' John 16:33**

This world is filled with evil but we are commanded to **'not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.'** Rom. 12:21

In these conditional statements Jesus is not giving us an **endorsement to be depressed and downcast.**

As a matter of fact, we really should be the most encouraged and the most positive of all people.

As Christians we should have the best outlook.

John writes to remind Christians about the predicament that the Christ is in.

1 Jn 2:13 'I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.'

1 Jn 2:14 'I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.'

1 Jn 4:4 'Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.'

1 Jn 5:4 'everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.'

1 Jn 5:5 'Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?'

When Jesus is setting this condition of hating this life, He is not giving an endorsement to have a bad attitude. In respect to that, it's actually the exact opposite.

Despite the shortcomings of this life, we hate this life, and we have our minds fixed on another life. We have our minds and our eyes and our affections fixed on another world.

### **Love and Hate.**

v. 20 'Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast'

### **Some Greeks.**

v. 21 'these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

### **Greeks desire to see Jesus.**

v. 22 "Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus."

**Philip and Andrew.** Philip and Andrew seem to always be connected in John's mind.

John 1:44 'Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.'

John 1:45 'Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.'" (Deut. 18)

### **The loaves and the fish.**

**John 6:5**

**John 6:7**

It seems obvious that of the disciples Philip and Andrew (Andrew, Simon Peter's brother) are usually engaged in service and matters of collecting people that are on the periphery.

v. 23 'Jesus answered them, saying 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.'

### **The hour.**

Jn 7:30 'they were seeking to arrest Him, but no one laid a hand on Him, because **His hour** had not yet come.'

Jn 8:20 'these words He/Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple, but no one arrested Him, because **His hour** had not yet come.'

### **His mother and the woman at the well.**

Jn 2:4 'Woman, what does this have to do with me? **My hour** has not yet come.'

Jn 4:21 'Woman, believe Me, **the hour** is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.'

These Greeks are seeking Christ. God's Spirit is searching out and seeking out those who will worship Him.

The Spirit of God hovers over the earth and it sifts the hearts of men and it finds those that it will find a dwelling place.

Jn 5:25 'Truly, truly, I say to you, **an hour** is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.'

We saw in the previous passage, even the disciples didn't understand.

### **The Son of Man.**

John 12:23 'the hour has come that the Son of Man be glorified.'

### **To be glorified.**

v. 24 '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.'

### **Truly truly.**

### **Grain of wheat.**

### **Unless the grain of wheat dies.**

**Remains alone.**

**If it dies, it bears much fruit.**

v. 25 'He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.'

What is Jesus talking about? What does He mean that if you love your life you're going to lose it? What does Jesus mean that if you want to gain eternal life then you would hate this life?

**Look at John 16.**

**v. 1-4, v. 12-15, v.16-24**

Jn 16:1 'These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time/the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.'

**Sorrow that turns to Joy.**

**John 16:16-24**

We live in an hour right now. A time period. An era of life.

Looking at it, it is often sorrowful. And we have to ask; **What is sorrowful about this life?** What is it that would cause a Christian to hate this life?

It is one thing that makes this life sorrowful; it's sin! Sin destroys life.

'the wages of sin is death.' The one thing in this whole world and all of life is sin.

**Loving this life and losing this life.**

**The conditional statement; IF you love this life, THEN you will lose this life.**

**1 John 2:15 'Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.'**

**Hating this life and gaining eternal life.**

**Hating the things of the world.**

It is a fine line to walk in obedience to God, but we are called through this narrow gate, to hate the things of this world and, yet love the people that are in love with the things of the world.

**'they will know that we are Christians by our love'**

**John 13:35 'everyone will know that you are My/Christ's disciples if you love one another'**

**Matt. 5:43 'you have heard that it was said, 'you shall love you neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you to love your enemy.'**

**Matt. 6:24 'No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.'**

**The entire scope** of life is marked by sin. Sin marks all of life. We are told directly by Christ to hate this marker over our lives.

The selfishness. The deception. The gossiping. The angry and spitefulness. All of this sin marks life and there are many who love this style of living. Jesus says, they will lose their life.

The entire system of life in the world is marked by sin and controlled by money. Money controls much of the system of the world and it is what directs many peoples thinking.

Money directs the motives of much of a person's life. Jesus says you should hate this way of thinking and instead, be where He is. Do what He does. Knowing that Chrstit has saved us from such a reprobate way of thinking.

Jesus condemns this. You cannot love money and love God. You love one and hate the other. The two are mutually exclusive.

This same dualism applies here. All of the things that mark this life are to be hated.

**Matt. 10:22 'you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.'**

**Matt. 24:9 'they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.'**

**Matt. 24:10 'then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.'**

**Lk 1:71 'we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us'**

**Lk 6:22 'blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!'**

**Lk 6:27 'I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you'**

**If, Then condition of being a disciple of Christ.**

**Lk 14:26 'if anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.'**



### **Parable of the Unrighteous Steward**

**Lk 16:1-14** – Make friends with sinners, use your resources from God to befriend these people, NOT by way of endorsing their sin, but in order to win friends for eternity.

**Lk 19:1-10** Zaccheus' Repentance and Conversion. (Taught just prior to Jesus' Triumphal Entry.)

**Lk 21:17** 'you will be hated by all for my name's sake'

**Jn 3:20** 'everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.'

**Jn 7:7** 'the world cannot hate you but it hates Me because I testify that its deeds are evil'

What is it that you are supposed to hate about this life? It is the evil deeds of this world.

**Jn 12:25** 'He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.'

### Jesus explaining our love for each other and how the world will hate you.

**Jn 15:18** 'If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.'

**Jn 15:19** 'If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.'

**Jn 15:23** 'If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me hates My Father also.'

**Jn 15:24** 'If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, "THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE." (Ps 35, Ps. 36)

**Jn 17:14** 'I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.'

What is it about this life that we are to hate? It is the evil one. It is the temptation of sin.

### **Paul's wrestling with his own flesh and hatred of his life.**

**Ro. 7:15** 'I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.'

Paul, a redeemed Apostle, the primary teaching of the NT church, recognizes that he still has a sin nature inside of him and he hates that.

Paul hates this nature that is counter to the nature of God that has saved him.

**'O, wretched man that I am.'**

**Notice, Jesus does not** condemn the Greeks seeking Him. He clarifies what is necessary of being His disciples.

It is the hatred of our own sin nature. Our own sin nature is what really does define our individual lives.

What does Jesus say to the Rich Man? 'why do you call me good, there is none good but God'

**Relationship of the Church to Christ and the Husband to the Wife.**

**Eph. 5:29 'no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church'**

**As disciples of Christ we live in this dualism. A love of Christ, a love for God, a love for our brothers and sisters in Christ, and a hatred of this sinful life.**

**Christ doesn't condemn this Greek seekers.**

**Tit. 3:3 'For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.'**

**Heb. 1:9 'you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness, God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.'**

**Look at this criteria in John's epistle about following Christ as a disciple.**

**1 Jn 2:9 'Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.'**

**1 Jn 2:11 'Whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.'**

**J Jn 3:13 'Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.'**

**Do you realize that the world hated Christ?** That's why the world killed Christ.

How do you live in this life when you are expected to follow Christ? How in the world would it even be possible that you could live a life in this world that hates Christians, hates Christ and all the while, you are expected to not love your life, not love the things of this world, not love money and not pursue money – **HOW is it that you are going to be able to make a way in this world where you are a foreigner now, you are an alien now, you do not and will not fit in, how will you make a way in that world?**

You won't. God will make a way. God is going to give you a path to live by.

God gives us a confession. **'if you profess Christ before men He will profess you before your Heavenly Father.'**

**There is a wager** made in your salvation. You cannot purchase your salvation, you cannot work for it, you cannot earn it.

The price of salvation has been paid, but the price of being a Saint will be paid every day of your life.

In this you must hate your life. You hate the sin nature that is in you. You hate that you have lived in sin and in some ways still are sinning your flesh against God.

Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit you cannot please God.

**The Cost of Discipleship** is a high cost. You won't find success in this life. It won't happen.

Christ did not die on the cross so that you would get a promotion at work.

Look what Christ says here, 'Where I am, there my disciples will be' – Well, **Where is Christ going? The Cross.**

To be a disciple of Christ, you must pick up your cross and follow Him.

**1 Jn 3:15 'Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.'**

**1 Jn 4:20 'If someone says, I love God and hates his brother, he is a liar for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.'**

**Jude 23 'hate the garment that is polluted by the flesh'**

That is hate the actual flesh that is unredeemed in our own life.

**Hate evil works**

Rev. 2:6 'this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate'

Rev. 17:16

Look at **Philippians 1-4** for Paul's expression of losing/hating this life for Eternity. He considers it a joy to do so.

**Communion**

v. 26 'If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.'

**Anyone serves Me – if (conditional)** – serve and worship are essentially synonymous concepts.

**Must follow Me (result)** – Serving Christ is conditional on following Christ. Worshiping Christ is conditional on following Christ.

**Where I am, there My servant will be also.**

**Anyone serves Me – if (conditional)**

**the Father will honor him (result)**

Where would these people follow Christ? To the cross. Where the grain of wheat dies and is buried and eventually through the power of His Spirit, bears more fruit.

In order to serve Christ and follow Christ our life would fit the same pattern of life. That we would die to our self so that God would be glorified through our life.

**Commonion.**

**John 12:20-27 | Deciding to Follow Jesus 'In this passage Jesus is approached by a number of Greek seekers. They seek to know Jesus. In Jesus' response to their desire to worship at the Passover, He proclaims His coming death and says that if you are going to follow Him you must hate your life. Possibly a confusing statement to some, but not to those closest to Christ. Join us as we explain what Christ means by hating your life and gaining it for eternity.'**

**Kids/Small Group**

1. What does Christ mean by hating your life and gaining it for eternity? What does He not mean by this?
2. What are some deductions of how Christ responds to the Greeks pursuit of Him? What happens about 2 months after this setting in Peter's vision in the book of Acts?
3. What is meant by 'if a gain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it bears much fruit'?
4. What can we understand about Christ's expectation of evangelism and discipleship from this passage? It is not constrained to demographic. It is condition on 'hating your life' and 'serving Him' and 'being where He is' – what does Christ mean by being where He is? Ref. Where is Christ about to go? What is expected of a disciple of Christ by following in His footsteps?
5. How does Paul's letter to the Philippians help expand the concept of hating this life or losing this life for the sake of Christ? How does an illustration of John 15/The True Vine coincide with this same axiom?