

Sermon Outline

“Choice, Promise, Motivation”

John 12:20-26 – J.D. Greear – October 9, 2011

Introduction

1. In verses 20-21 of this passage, the Greeks (whom God had intended for all of history to save) were standing before Jesus. These were not nameless, faceless individuals, statistics of the billions of unsaved people. These were real men and women with real families standing face to face with Jesus, asking to see Jesus, longing for Jesus.
2. The nations are standing before Jesus and Jesus turns and addresses his disciples. Why? Doesn't he care about the Greeks? Why is he ignoring them? Jesus responds to his disciples because he's telling his disciples what must be true about *them* to bring salvation to the Greeks.

Choice (verse 24a)

1. Jesus contrasts two ways to live by using the example of a seed. We can do one of two things with a seed.
 - a. We can leave it on the shelf, fully intact, not disturbed, benefitting nobody but itself.
 - b. Or, we can plant it into the ground, at which point it is shattered, and its life as a seed dies, but from it comes life that benefits many.
 - c. Jesus is telling his disciple that their lives are like the seed. Only in death does life come forth.
2. Jesus is giving us two distinct ways of living.
 - a. The first is self-contained ... for us. We leverage our lives and talents for personal benefit. We've taken our lives and evaluated how to create the best possible world for ourselves.
 - b. The second is another completely distinct way of living. We look at our lives, our gifts, our income and our time as something to be shattered and poured out for the kingdom of God.
 - c. We have a choice: We will either hoard our lives and live them for ourselves, or we will pour them out for others. What choice have you made?

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3. The plainest and most pointed meaning of this passage is this: The life of the nations comes only through the death of the church. It's only as the life of the church is shattered and given away that the nations will live.

Promise (verse 24b)

1. There is a promise that if we offer our lives, God will use them to bring great fruit. This promise is staggering: God has already put in the hands of the church what is necessary to bring life to the nations. The problem is not that God is unwilling or unable to reach the nations; the problem is that we, the church, haven't offered ourselves to God to be used.
2. "Intercessory faith" is standing between God's great willingness and their great need and becoming the bridge over which God's willingness flows into their need. Belief unlocks the power for the mission of God.
 - a. Do we realize how willing and able God is to accomplish this great task? Do we realize that all that stands between his great willingness and their great need is somebody to believe him and intercede?

Motivation (verse 26)

1. There are two components of motivation to die like the seed:
 - a. The first component for Jesus' followers is this: Jesus is enough. Where Jesus is, that's where his servant is content to be. Jesus is a treasure worth leaving everything else for. He's a greater treasure than anything else on earth (safety, money, security). For him, we should walk away from every earthly thing to possess him.
 - b. The second component of motivation is this: In response to what Jesus has done for us, we should do the same for others. Where would we be had Jesus not been a seed who fell into the ground and died for us? We would be lost. In the same way, the Lord uses our surrendered lives as instruments in his hands. By laying down our lives, Jesus brings salvation to the nations.

Fellowship Starters

1. Take time as a Care Group to read John 12:20-26.
2. In this passage, Jesus contrasts two ways to live – for self or for his kingdom. If your life was a movie, who is the main character – you or Jesus?
3. We have a choice: We will either hoard our lives and live them for ourselves, or we will pour them out for others. What choice have you made?

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4. J.D. Greear said, "The life of the nations comes only through the death of the church." In what ways (e.g., prayer, serving, giving, going, etc.) can you lay your life down for saving life to come to the nations?
5. Why is the promise of good fruit in verse 24 an encouragement to lay down our lives for the salvation of the nations?
6. Why is treasuring Jesus and following Jesus' example of laying his life down for us motivation to take the gospel to the nations?
7. How would you desire to grow in dying to self to see the gospel advance among the nations?