

**John 12:35-50**  
**(Isaiah 6:1-13; Revelation 4:1-11)**  
**“Whose Glory Do You Seek?”**

## **Introduction**

Each Memorial Day, we remember those who loved others more than they loved themselves, who gave their lives so that others could continue living in freedom. There is a sort of glory, well deserved, in the honor we bestow on those who have fallen in battle. But it is, by its very nature, a passing glory. This earth is littered with the bones of those cut down in youth, sent to fight their country's wars, and they deserve the flags and songs, the parades and praise we give them. Yet, as many warriors throughout the ages have known, there is a greater glory than any mere human can bestow, a weight of glory, of substantial presence and transforming power, that marks the blessing of God's well-done. And it is the difference between these two kinds of glory that lies at the heart of our text.

## **Body**

### **1. Three inadequate views of discipleship (12:35-43).**

- *Hearing Jesus speak is essential, but insufficient (12:35-36).*

The crowds have listened to Jesus gladly, and have assumed that they will always be able to hear him. But Jesus warns them, “The light is among you a little while longer” (12:35). They love to hear him tell stories of God's mercy and grace, to hear him debate the religious leaders, to teach them of a kingdom where this world's values are turned upside down and where God embraces those whom this world rejects. They do not realize that his public ministry is at an end and that they will seek him, but no longer find him. And they do not grasp the crucial fact that his words have always been a call, not merely to listen, but to follow. Thus here he says again, “*Walk* while you have the light “ (12:35).

So, too, our sermons and Bible studies, important as they are, are not enough if they leave us with the impression that the discipleship is merely about words, ideas, things learned and accepted as true. Rather, discipleship is the call to die to the people we once were and to rise to new life in Christ. Our new life, our new vocation is simply following Jesus.

- *Seeing Jesus act is essential, but insufficient (12:37).*

The crowds have been astonished at the mighty works, the signs and wonders, that Jesus has performed. He has done these things to demonstrate the power of God over everything that would destroy his creation and separate us from

his love: rebellion, sickness, addiction, poverty, injustice. All these things God will overturn when his kingdom comes in power and glory. It has already begun to come in Jesus' ministry, and continues to be displayed where communities of Christians live as the Body of Christ, resisting the devil's work and setting captives free.

But, having said that, we must remember Jesus' warning that, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign" (Matthew 16:4). Seeing signs and wonders is not enough. John laments the unbelief of those who had seen his signs: "Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him" (12:37). This is why John quotes the prophet Isaiah. When Isaiah saw God's glory, he realized his vocation: "And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me'" (Isaiah 6:8). What is John's point? Just this: It is not merely seeing signs and wonders that transforms people. It is seeing what those signs and wonders signify, namely, the glory of God. It is recognizing God's glory that changes a person forever. And the proper response, the only sane response, to God's glory is obedience, following Jesus.

- *Believing in Jesus is essential, but insufficient (12:42).*

We must be very careful here: In one sense, believing is certainly enough. In fact at the end of this gospel, John will say that his gospel was written "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (20:31). However, way back at the end of chapter two, John had already begun warning us that there is a difference between true belief and false, between faith that is natural and reflexive, and faith that is the gift of God. So here, he describes leaders who "believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God" (12:42-43).

The faith that is God's gift, the faith that lays hold upon God's grace, is not merely assent to certain gospel truths. It is rather faith that acts upon the truths believed. Not merely hearing, but doing. It is faith that turns from the sad quest for human glory to a quest for the glory that is God's alone and that he only gives to those who are his.

## **2. Three marks of true discipleship:**

- *Making the costly confession of Jesus Christ as Lord (12:42).*

So, a disciple is one who is willing, no matter what the cost, to confess Jesus as Lord. As Jesus said on another occasion, "whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God,

but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God” (Luke 12:8-9). And, in the words of the apostle Paul, “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved” (Romans 10:9-10).

- *Seeking God’s glory rather than the glory of men (12:43).*

Glory is much more than mere praise. Its Hebrew meaning is weightiness, substance, reality, presence. It is ultimately seeking the presence and reality of God, as well as God’s praise, above the reality and presence of anyone else. And those who seek him find him, when they seek him with all their hearts (Jeremiah 29:13).

- *Not merely hearing, but doing God’s Word (12:47).*

The great mark of the disciple of Jesus, of one who seeks God’s glory rather than the fleeting glory of man, is a growing, joyful obedience, a heart that responds to God’s grace as did the prophet Isaiah: “Here am I! Send me.” We respond because we have come to know that hearing Jesus words is hearing God Word, that seeing Jesus act is seeing God at work, that trusting and obeying him is life and joy and peace, walking out of darkness into light, out of death into life.

## **Conclusion**

What of you? Perhaps you have been listening and watching for years. Perhaps you even believe that the gospel is true. Yet you’re still seeking the glory of this passing world rather than giving up “what you cannot keep to gain what you cannot lose” (Jim Elliot). Don’t miss the most important thing, the only eternally important thing. Don’t miss life as he passes you by and calls out, “Come, follow me!” Cry out, “Here am I! Send me.” And then get up and begin to follow the Light of the World, who is this world’s only hope, the only way to everlasting life.

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