



Part 1: Life Through Death

John 12:20-26

God has ordained that His eternal Life comes through the Death of His Son, and we experience His life as we deny ourselves for Jesus.

I. Lent: Our Sober Reflection on the Cross

“And so he was raised on a cross, and a title was fixed, indicating who it was being executed. Painful it is to say, but more terrible not to say...He who suspended the earth is suspended, he who fixed the heavens is fixed, he who fastened all things is fastened to the wood the Master is outraged; God is murdered.” Melito of Sardis (A.D. 180) (quoted in *The Crucifixion* by Fleming Rutledge)

Lent is smelling salts to awaken and reorient us around reality, God, our condition, and the great love of God and cost of our salvation. Easter has no real meaning apart from the crucifixion of the Son of God.

We cannot really appreciate the love of God without looking long at the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross of Jesus is the clearest picture we have of the love of God.

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”
Romans 12:1-2

II. Secular Salvation

Source: This Cultural Moment podcast, “The Secular Salvation Schema” (11-27-2018).

There is a secular scheme of salvation that mimics the Christian scheme of salvation.

1. Our original condition (Eden) = we are good, unfallen, innocent, and happy. This is our inner child or true self. We believe that we just need to get back in touch with who we really are and reconnect with our true self.
2. The Fall = something has happened to us that has obstructed and hindered our happiness. This may be trauma, tradition, externally-given identities, any kind of authority, or binding commitments of any kind. These external realities bring “sin,” which is anything that makes us unhappy or denies us pleasure.
3. Secular salvation = rediscovering your inner self or your true self. Holiness or the concept of “fleeing from sin” = rejecting all externally given identities, binding commitments, external authorities, that restrict our autonomy.

The primary god of Western, modern culture is now the “sovereign self” (philosophically known as “expressive individualism” arising from “secular humanism”).

In this worldview, the individual replaces the Creator God as the center of reality, and the ultimate goal of life is happiness (now perceived as pleasure) as determined by the individual self. All external ideas of truth or morality are rejected for one’s personal feelings and desires.

“God is dead, but He’s replaced by everybody else.” James K.A. Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular*

4. Secular “discipleship” = working to create an outer identity that expresses your inner self.
5. Heaven = pleasure and happiness defined as feeling good about yourself.

III. God’s Salvation in Jesus Christ

- A. Eternal Life through the Death of the Son of God (John 12:23).

Jesus has been referring to his “hour” throughout the Gospel of John saying it was not time (John 2:4; 7:6-8, 30; 8:20). Now he says his hour has come for his death (12:23, 27, 30-33; 13:1; 17:1).

B. Life through Death: The Law of the Kingdom of God (John 12:24)

Jesus says his life is like the grain of wheat planted in the ground. In the Kingdom of God, death is a condition of fuller life. The pathway to glory is through suffering.

C. Experiencing Eternal Life through Death to Self for Jesus (12:25-26)

Jesus' language of love/hate reflects a Semitic taste for vivid contrasts (Matt. 5:30; 6:24; 14:26).

Jesus is telling us that there is a way that life in the Kingdom of God works. The way we experience eternal life is through denying our right to live apart from God on our own terms.

Eternal life is experienced as we make a daily decision to follow Jesus in the way of the cross – putting to death our sin nature that wants us to live our life for ourselves rather than to glorify God.

“It’s not a question of giving up sin, but of giving up my right to myself, my natural independence, and my self-will...Beware of refusing to go to the funeral of your own independence.” Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, December 9

As we die to our own self-determination, we experience God’s eternal life. Our lives become the source for greater life for others.

“To the one who is willing to follow Jesus in this freely willed love and obedience there is the promise of abiding fellowship with him and of sharing with him in the honor which the Father bestows on him. To be a servant of Jesus means to follow him on the way of the cross, and in doing so to abide in him.” Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light has Come*

IV. Seeing the Crucified Son, Seeing God’s Glory (12:21, 23, 28)

Q: You want to see Jesus? The ultimate revelation of Jesus is as the slain lamb! (Revelation 5:9-10). Jesus is worshipped as the slain lamb for the sins of the world. If we want to see Jesus, we must look at him as the crucified Savior.

The crucifixion of the Son of God is the ultimate manifestation of the glory of God! When we see the Son of God giving himself for us in love, we are seeing the outpouring of the love of the Father for rebellious sinners like us.

Discussion Questions:

Read John 12:20-26. The “hour” Jesus refers to is his predetermined crucifixion (John 2:4; 7:6-8, 30; 8:20; 12:27, 30-33; 13:1; 17:1).

1. What is Jesus saying about his crucifixion? How does the analogy to the seed speak to the way his death will work?
2. What does Jesus say is true about our orientation to this life now? What do you think he is saying?
3. How does Jesus describe the response of his disciples? What promise does he make to them?
4. What has been your experience concerning this teaching by Jesus? How has Jesus’ words shaped your understanding of living as a Christian?
5. The Gentiles ask to “see Jesus” (John 12:21). What do you think John might want us to “see” about Jesus and God’s glory?