

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday In Lent (1<sup>st</sup>, Sunday of Passion)

Scripture: John 12: 20-33

Message: "Glorifying God"

As the Pharisees and the high priests continued insulting, castigating, and criticizing Jesus, he did not waste his energy arguing with them; instead, He proved His claim by asking God the Father to glorify Him.

How? Glad you asked, for that's what I want to share with you this morning. But before that, let me start by saying something about human pride. Speaking of pride, an American author and Pastor John C Maxell says " there two kinds of pride, both good and bad. Good pride represents our ordinary and self respect, bad pride is the deadly sin of superiority that reeks of conceit and arrogance."

We live in a country where we pride ourselves on what we have accomplished, who we are as individuals, and as a nation. We make many claims, that we are the most powerful nation on the face of the earth and the richest country in the world. We pride ourselves – as a leader of free world!

But we have given a blind eye to the ugly face of racism, as a result the blood of the innocent brothers and sisters that has been spilled across the nation, and as we speak, their blood including that of our sisters of the Asian community which is very fresh is crying out; where is the freedom you are so proud of?

Just try to imagine the cries and agony their children, family members and friends are going through.

I pray that their cry will not be in vain, but it will motivate us to find the means to end this evil of racism in this country. This has to start with love and doing the right thing.

Micah 6:8 reminds us what Lord God expects of us saying; "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of us? To act justly and love mercy and walk humbly with God." When we do that we glorify God.

But the problem with human beings is this: when we do well in life, we boast; for example when we get a promotion, we praise ourselves saying, I have worked so hard to acquire what I have. I have worked so hard that I should have gotten this position yesterday.

And when we have good health, we praise ourselves, saying, I eat well, I exercise, I do this or that to keep myself healthy. Even when our children do well either in school or in life, we again pride ourselves saying, we brought them up well. By so doing, we fail to count it as blessings from God.

We have also glorified individuals, by uplifting them to the highest level, and made them feel so powerful to the point of feeling that without them we cannot survive. We both forget that human beings cannot take God's glory for themselves.

Herod tried it and it didn't go well with him; Acts 12:20-23, tells us *"on an appointed day, Herod dressed in a royal clothing, sat on the throne, and made a speech to them. The people shouted, "The voice of God and not of a man! immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he didn't give God the glory. He was eaten by worms and died."*

My point here is not to wish such a thing to happen to anybody, but it's a reminder that God's glory belongs to God alone.

And how I wish when all is well, we could all learn to say like the Psalmist in Psalm 115:1, *"Not us, not us, O Lord, not us, but to your name be the glory because of your love and faithfulness."* That is all God wants from us!

For by so doing, we become like mirrors and the light to this fractured world; That is what Christ called us to be when he said in Matthew 5:14-16, *"You are the light of the world."* For Christ Himself is that light, the light that attracts people not only to know him but also to have personal relationship with him as they acknowledge his saving power.

In John 12: 23, we see the Greeks coming not only for the yearly religious festival, but also to see Jesus in person, (remember Greeks or gentiles were considered "outsiders" when it come to the blessings that God promised to the Israelites). But with Christ's coming, the blessings were no longer limited to a particular group nation, but to all of God's people.

So, when the outsiders came asked to see Jesus in person, Jesus said, *"The hour has come for the son of man to be glorified: (John 12:23).* For He knew those outsiders will carry out the message of salvation to the other parts of the world. So, that all people will know the truth and that truth will set free!

So, knowing that the enemies of the truth were planning to kill him. Jesus reminded them that even his death will glorify God; And he was not expecting them to glorify him for this was already prophesied by prophet Isaiah, when he said, *"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrow, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Isaiah 53:3).*

Jesus, also reminded them that his death was like a grain that had to die in order to multiply. For he knew very well that after his death and resurrection, his world of salvation will spread to all corners of the earth.

At the same time Jesus was troubled (v27). They did not see it that way, Instead they were interested in getting to kill him; so that they will continue with their corrupt activities in the name of God.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, even today Jesus is troubled by what we are doing to our fellow human beings. Especially when we use the name of God to justify our evil actions. But the Good News is, even though Jesus was troubled, he did not hate them; instead, he continued loving them all, even to the death on the cross. For that was his purpose on earth, to save us all!

And, for us who called by his name, we have a responsibility to be who God called us to be; as prophet Isaiah reminds us in Isaiah 43:7 that everyone who is called by God's name, God created and made them for His glory. For that reason, apostle Paul reminds Christians in 1 Cor 10:31, to do everything for the glory of God. (1Cor 10:31).

For in the end, as Jesus himself said, in John 12:32-33, that "*And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself*". Yes, he will draw his people from all corners of the earth! This includes people from every race and nation.

That includes you and me. For that reason, Matthew will remind us, to let our light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matt 5:16)

Therefore, during this time of lent, as followers of Jesus Christ, go out and live a life that glorifies God.

As we conclude our Sunday service here, we are going to song hymn # 72, "*To God be the glory, great things he has done! So, he loved the world that he gave us his son, who yield his life an atonement for sin, and o-opened the life-gate that all may go in.*" Let us continue singing this song as we continue reflecting on the sacrifice that Christ made so that we may have eternal life.

**Amen.**