

FOLLOWING JESUS: JESUS AGONIZING

John 12:20-33

Dr. Doyle Sager, First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Missouri

March 24, 2019

WATCH/LISTEN: <https://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/following-jesus-jesus-agonizing/>

Have you noticed? Life is not all waffles and strawberries or trips to Central Dairy. Some of you are hurting this morning. You're in pain. What you need to hear is that a part of following Jesus is learning how he handled suffering. Following Jesus does not eliminate suffering in our lives. But what if Jesus' approach to suffering could help us see suffering from a new angle? Read v. 24 carefully. The same seed that contains death also contains life, resurrection, hope. When you look at a kernel of wheat, can you see the full stalk? Of course not. When you're in the midst of suffering, you can't see victory. In the middle of guilt, you can't see cleansing, in the middle of being wounded, you can't see forgiving a grudge, in the middle of grief, you can't see hope.

Following Jesus means we give up control, give up getting revenge, give up shallow definitions of success, give up "me-first;" give up the rage inside. We let go, release, trust. And look. Here in v. 26 is our memory verse for Lent. A.M. Hunter has written that this is the sum total of a believer's duty: follow. And the sum total of our reward: to be where Jesus is [*The Gospel According to John*, quoted in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament—The Gospel According to John*, Revised, Leon Morris, ed., p. 528]. The only way to serve Jesus is to be in a personal relationship with him. The only way to follow Jesus is to be in a personal relationship with him.

In v. 27, Jesus begins to really agonize. His heart is troubled, disturbed, stirred up, unsettled. John's Gospel does not contain a Garden of Gethsemane scene as do the other three gospels. This is John's version of the Garden. Now get this. In the midst of his pain, a voice came from heaven (v. 28). Some thought it was thunder, but Jesus knew better. In his darkest hour, Jesus was fortified by the Father's voice. When you are in agony, no matter what others hear, make sure you hear the voice from heaven. No matter what others are saying around you, make sure you hear God's voice. It's there.

Eugene Peterson reminds us that when we are in a place of pain and suffering, we are to place every detail before God and Christ, our High Priest. Doing so will allow us to see suffering as God sees it, as Jesus experienced it and to thus participate in God's great redemptive work [*Praying with the Psalms*, Feb. 26].

Here are a couple of reminders to help us grab this and take it into our hearts and minds. 1) Others are watching. When I was first starting out in the ministry, it was popular for churches to include v. 21 written on a plaque on their pulpits: "Sirs, we would see Jesus..." Here is the amazing truth. The world is hungry for Jesus. In v. 21, "We wish to see Jesus." Their request uses a Greek verb of continuous action—"they kept requesting..." The world is hungry, longing for Jesus. When we're in pain and life is falling apart, remember. People may be wanting to see

Jesus in the midst of our suffering. Be ready to share Christ, even in your pain. Go ahead and share Christ with others. If you wait to share Jesus until you get your act together, guess what? You know the rest of that sentence!

2) Surrender and trust lead to glory. John loves double meanings (being born, water, bread, etc.). And v. 32 uses a double meaning. Being lifted up meant being put on a cross, his execution and it also meant being LIFTED UP as in glorified. And note the verb. As he is lifted up (both meanings), he will draw people to himself, implying people do not naturally come to Christ. There must be an outside force. In your suffering and bitterness, allow the force of Christ to draw you to himself. Surrender and trust. Whatever you're going through, Jesus wants to be near you.

Hanging around art galleries more than I used to, I'm learning a lot about art methodology. *Kintsugi* is a Japanese art form. The word means "golden repair." Broken pottery is restored by covering it with a gold powder dusting which fills the seams with gold. Instead of hiding the flaws, the flaws become part of the story. Golden repair. You may feel broken. But you are not alone. There is Someone blowing gold dust all over your broken places.

