

The Hour has Come

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[0 : 01] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on the 20th of February 2000. The preacher is Phil Muleman. His sermon is entitled, The Hour Has Come, and is from John chapter 12, verses 27 to 36.

Now, Heavenly Father, I pray that you would open our hearts and our minds to understand your word, to understand what you have done for us, and that we indeed would act upon it.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. If you have a Bible in the pews, you may like to open it to page 875 as we look at this passage where Jesus speaks about his death.

From John chapter 12, verses 27 to 36. Well, you can tell a great person by the way they handle times of crisis. A football player in a losing football team like Richmond may not give up, even though they might be 40 points behind in the last quarter, the dying minutes of the last quarter.

They do not give up. They go for the ball, and they continue on with it, even though there's no hope for them winning the game. Well, they're a Richmond player. They haven't got much hope, have they? But anyway, they do not give up in times of crisis.

[1 : 26] You can tell a great person by the way they handle these times of crisis. A soldier who risks their life in the heat of battle to save a friend. Winston Churchill during World War II said, We will never, never, never, never give up.

And one of the church reformers, Martin Luther, when he was summoned to what they call the Diet of Worms, and told to recant, said this, If you will show me my error by means of the clear teaching of the word of God, I will repent.

My conscience is held captive by the word of God. I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither honest nor safe. Here I stand.

I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen. One of the early Christian saints, and a martyr by the name of Polycarp, for those who have come for a baptism this morning, if you're planning on other kids, Polycarp is a good name.

When Polycarp was brought before the crowd in the Roman Colosseum, said this, when told to renounce his faith or to be thrown to the lions, Polycarp responded, Eighty-six years I have served him.

[2 : 46] He has never done me any wrong. How then shall I blaspheme my king who has saved me? And when he was additionally threatened with being burned at the stake, Polycarp responded, Your fire may last for an hour.

Then it is over. But do you know of the judgment to come, the punishment that is forever? Have you not thought of that, Mr. Proconsul? Oh, you may do with me as you wish.

But one day you will stand before the judge of heaven and of earth. Great examples of people in crisis, aren't they?

But the greatest example of character was exhibited as Jesus faced the cross, faced the cross that was looming before him. And in this passage from John this morning, we begin to see his character shine in this time of crisis.

And in this passage we see Jesus' commission and his submission. Well, first his commission. In verse 27, Jesus says, Now my soul is troubled, and what should I say?

[4 : 02] Father, save me from this hour? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.

Jesus says what is coming in his life was what he was commissioned for. He knows that the cross is coming. But he also knows that this is what the Father wanted from him.

The question is why. If you look at verse 31, it says, Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world, speaking about Satan, will be driven out.

Notice here that the judgment is coming. However, it's not coming in the way that we would expect it or the way that it was expected. God's wrath is not going to be focused on the world as it was, say, back in Genesis where they talk about the flood.

And he's not going to destroy a city as he did in the days of Judges, for example, in the Old Testament. God's wrath is going to be in response to all sin and will be focused on one man, the man on the cross, Jesus Christ.

[5 : 18] And this is why Jesus' soul was troubled. He wasn't afraid to die. He was dreading the wrath of God. Jesus, who had from all time known perfect fellowship with the Father, was now about to face the Father's anger, God's anger.

He who had known no sin was going to suffer judgment as payment for the sin of the very ones who had rejected him. The Apostle Peter explains in the letter that he wrote to Christians, we read some of the verses at the opening of this service this morning, he reads this about Jesus.

He says this about Jesus. He, Jesus himself, bore our sins in his body on the tree so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.

By his wounds, you have been healed. And a little further on in that letter, he explains it even further. For Christ, Jesus died for sins once for all.

The righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God. On that decisive moment on the cross, when Jesus died on the cross, Satan was defeated.

[6 : 39] Satan and his host, however, had had a party. They thought that they had won. They hadn't. They hadn't at all. Jesus faced hell for us and emerged victorious.

And on that cross, Jesus paid the debt of sin for everyone who would believe and trust in him. He faced God's wrath so that we would not have to.

Now there's an old story that seeks to illustrate the cost of this sacrifice. And it seems a bridgekeeper was tending the drawbridge over the river. And on this particular night, the man had decided to bring his son to work with him.

The phone rang. And it was the train engineer from further up the track informing the bridgekeeper of the train's impending arrival. And when he hung up the phone, the man hung up the phone, he put the gears in motion to close the bridge so that the train could cross safely.

He was startled to hear a blood-curdling scream from outside his shack. Unknown to him, his son had left the shack and had fallen into the mechanism which controlled the bridge.

[8 : 02] The man had a very difficult decision to make. He could halt the closure of the bridge and try to pull his son out and save his life.

But to do so would mean the train would go crashing into the river. But to let the bridge close would cost him his son. What's he going to do?

He did the only thing he could do. He closed the bridge while he sobbed for his son. This story concludes with this heartbroken father watching the train pass safely.

As it passed, he saw people in the dining car enjoying themselves, laughing, eating, and so on. Others slept peacefully.

Some were reading. Everyone was totally unaware of the price that was just paid for them to cross the river.

[9 : 10] Now, it's a touching story, isn't it? It's certainly true that we do not appreciate the cost of our redemption when we think about what's just happened here.

But this story is in some ways deficient because the death of Christ on the cross was no accident. Jesus didn't stumble and fall when the father wasn't looking.

The father didn't agonise over who to save. God didn't agonise over who to save. You see, the cross was the father's design to save his rebellious and ungrateful creation.

It was the father's plan all along. We read in this passage in verse 28, of the father's audible voice confirming that he had indeed been glorified by the son.

And we think, as we read that, how comforting that would have been to the saviour. But in verse 30, Jesus said, the voice was not for his benefit, but for ours.

[10 : 14] The voice was for our benefit. And the father's voice that was heard here let us know that what was about to happen to Jesus was the father's perfect will.

So things were not out of control. God had things under control all along. Jesus is willing to go to the cross because he knows that when he is lifted up, he will draw all people to him.

And no longer would salvation be restricted to just a minority group of people, to the Jewish people. But now people of all races and all nations, you and me included, would have the opportunity to be children of God.

That's why Jesus went to the cross. That was his commission. Now friends, let me ask, do you appreciate the cost of your salvation?

God's grace, his undeserved favor poured out upon us is free, but it isn't cheap.

[11 : 22] It came at the cost of his son. Well, Jesus' commission is only part of the insight that this passage gives us.

We also learn here of Jesus' submission. And we see here at the beginning Jesus is uneasy. The reason he is uneasy is because his hour has come.

Throughout the Gospel of John, if you've been reading it and following along, you'll know that the words have been going along as Jesus has been speaking and people have been trying to catch him. There's an editorial comment throughout that says that his hour had not yet come.

Well, here Jesus says his hour has come. And in the other Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and so on, we see there that in the garden of Gethsemane on the night before Jesus died, he is in this garden down on his knees crying out, Father, if it is possible, let this cup, this cup of suffering, the cross that he's about to go to, let this cup pass from me.

And then he says some words, yet not what I want, but what you want. Not my will be done, but your will be done. These are words of great faith.

[12 : 45] Jesus doesn't debate. He doesn't give God alternatives. He doesn't plead for mercy. But Jesus does not give in to the uneasy feelings that he is going through at the time.

He responds with humility. And in verse 28 here, it says, glorify your name. We've just sung that song, glorify thy name. Well here, Jesus has said, glorify your name.

Now when was the last time you faced a crisis and said, Lord, it doesn't matter what happens to me. Whatever happens, may your name be honoured.

May your name be glorified. glorified. But that's what we're called to do. The Apostle Paul, reflecting on Jesus' submissive attitude, says this from Philippians, your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Do you hear this? We're not just to admire the submissive spirit of Jesus. We're called here to adopt the same attitude within our own lives. And this does not come easily to us.

[14 : 26] if we're more honest, we're much more prone to seeing the words glorify my name. Now you may have heard or you may have even sung the song Have Thine Own Way, Lord.

The first verse goes this, says this, Have Thine Own Way, Lord, have Thine Own Way. Thou art the potter, I am the clay. Mould me and make me after Thy will, after Your will, while I am waiting, yielded and still.

But if we were honest, it would be much more honest and easier to sing these words, Have my own way, Lord, have my own way. I want what I want. Let's make it today.

I know what's best, God, surely I do. Give me what I want and then I'll like you. They're not my words. Military men, in a sense, understand the attitude that Jesus had.

I should say military people understand the attitude that Jesus had. They are trained to serve with honour. They are reminded that they represent their country. And no word is to be spoken that would bring dishonour to their nation.

[15 : 45] Personal safety is secondary to the goal of protecting their homeland. And these soldiers face hated combat because of the love for their country.

So how do we cultivate this attitude in our daily living? Well, first, we must remember that this is the attitude that the Lord calls us to have. Our Lord told us that whoever wants to be great must be a servant.

He tells us that we are blessed if we are persecuted for righteousness' sake. It may not be easy, but it is right. Second, we must remember the character of God.

He deserves to be honoured. God deserves to be honoured. He is supremely worthy of this glory and honour. There is no service that we could give that would come close to what he deserves.

If we could give our lives a million times, it would still not come close to the honour and glory he deserves. Third, we must remember his promises.

[16 : 57] He has promised that nothing will separate us from his love. He promises that all things will work for the good of those who love him. He promises that he is preparing a place for us.

We'll see that in a couple of weeks in John chapter 14. And with all he has promised, submitting to his plan for our life may cause our souls to, at times, be troubled.

But he will never, ever steer us wrong if we trust in him. Well, there is some action for us to take. Let me suggest to you two things to do.

The first one is develop a submissive heart. Are you facing a crisis in your life? Are you tempted to stomp, to pout and demand that God grant your wishes?

Are you willing to walk faithfully even though you don't know what the future holds? Are you willing to trust his plan for your life even though you do not see what is going on?

[18 : 04] Whose glory do you seek? Paul, again in the letter to Philippians in chapter 1 verse 20 and 21, says it is his hope that Christ will be exalted in my body whether by life or by death.

And then he goes on to say, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain. For me to live while I'm alive is to serve Christ with all that I am.

And if I die, well I gain. I gain that heavenly reward, that heavenly reward of eternal life that is there. For me to live is Christ.

For me to die is but gain. Maybe you could think of those verses that I just read out a moment ago of the song, Have thine own way, Lord.

Put them to your memory. Try and remember those words. Think over that passage where it says, which I just said, for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

[19 : 13] Sing that song, Have thine own way, Lord, until it becomes your prayer. There is no sacrifice that he could ask of us that would be equal to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that he has given to us.

Sure, we may face painful times because of Jesus. But because of Christ, those who trust him are spared of facing God's wrath.

So the first thing is to develop a submissive heart. The second thing is to take advantage of the light. In fact, it is something here that Jesus urges us to do.

In verses 35 and 36, Jesus said to them, The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you.

If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of the light.

[20 : 17] Is it possible that you have been putting off getting serious with God? Have you been waiting for some elusive future time to decide where you will place your hope for eternity?

Jesus here warns those who are with him that the time is short. It's also a warning for us that the time is short. Who knows whether we will live to face tomorrow?

And even if you do live for many more years, why do you delay? Why do you delay? Jesus came into the world to die on a cross because he loves us.

He willingly went to the cross so that we would have the opportunity to cross this bridge from eternal torment to eternal life. Don't delay.

Don't delay. Maybe you don't know how to begin your relationship with Christ. Let me share with you three simple steps.

[21 : 18] The first one is this. Be honest. Be honest about your sin. sin. Before you can receive forgiveness, you must admit that you need it.

Stop pretending that you're doing fine. Stop hiding from the truth. Confess your sin to the Lord and to yourself. Face it squarely and nip it in the bud.

And understand how helpless you are to do anything to save yourself. So the first thing is be honest about your sin. The second thing is declare your trust in Christ.

Tell the Lord that you surrender to him. Tell him that you trust him for salvation and life because of the work that Jesus has done for you on the cross.

And tell him that you want Jesus to be the Lord and saviour of your life. Be honest about your sin. Declare your trust in Christ.

[22 : 21] The third thing, act on what you have declared. We're not saved from judgment because of what we do. Many people think that, but that's not the reason.

We're saved because of Christ's work on the cross. However, true faith, true trust in Jesus is active faith. If you mean what you say, then it is time to believe God's promise of salvation and start following Jesus.

It's time to take aim at removing things from your life that the Lord hates. And the thing he hates most is sin. It's time to start developing a daily relationship with him.

It's time to work at glorifying the Lord in your life. We say glorify thy name. Glorify your name. Not my name. Glorify your name.

God's name. And I warn you that this step will take a lifetime to learn. The good news, though, is that the Lord promises that he will help us.

[23 : 32] We're not left on our own when we decide to act on our faith and so on. God is there to help us through the process. So be honest about your sin, declare your trust in Christ, and act on what you declared.

Well, you know what Christ has done for you. You know what he has promised. You know what he is calling you to do. The only question that remains is this one.

What will you do with what you know? the best time to begin the journey of faith is now, not sometime in the future.

Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we give you great thanks and praise for your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. And Lord, we thank you that through his death on the cross and through trust in that, we have the means and way to eternal life.

We thank you, Lord, that that gift is so freely given to all of those who believe in you. Lord, I pray that you would help each one of us here to be honest about sin in our life and to know that we can receive forgiveness by admitting that to you.

[24 : 57] And Lord, I pray that you would help us to declare your trust in Jesus. And Lord, in declaring your trust, that we would show it by acting on what we have declared. more than we ask this for Jesus' sake and for the glory of his name.

Amen. Amen.