

We praise God for the privilege we have in beholding the culmination of Christ's converting work in this season of new professions of faith in our community. these born-again ones. Each of these new disciples will learn that "we must go through many trials to enter the kingdom of God." May the LORD greatly encourage us all as we pray for these new spiritual beginnings.

Monday: Read John 12:20-26

The Grain of Wheat

Jesus to focused the faith of the Greeks who request an audience with Him on the glory of His upcoming death. All disciples of Christ are to direct their faith to the Glory of the Cross. That is our theme this week, taken from Jesus' victorious words in the face of death, "Father, glorify your Name" (John 12:28). May God open our eyes more and more to our glorious crucified Savior. He not only endured our punishment on the Cross, but also gloriously restored our humanity by rising from the dead.

Meditate and Pray: Father, give us the faith to be the grain of wheat, willing to lose this life to keep it eternally. Amen. Sing about the life-giving, saving power of the Cross using hymn # 708:

1 O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
that in thine ocean depths its flow
may richer, fuller be.

2 O Light that follow'st all my way,
I yield my flick'ring torch to thee;
my heart restores its borrowed ray,
that in thy sunshine's blaze its day
may brighter, fairer be.

3 O Joy that seekest me through pain
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
and feel the promise is not vain
that morn shall tearless be.

4 O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
and from the ground there blossoms red
life that shall endless be.

Tuesday: Read John 12:20-26 & 12:31-33

Christ Lifted Up

Our opening verses, in which Greeks unsuccessfully seek an audience with Jesus, could be misunderstood as a refusal of access by the Lord. Jesus does appear unresponsive to these Greeks in verses 20-22, burdened as He was with the troubling prospect of the Cross (John 12:27). But nothing could have been more inviting for these seekers than for Jesus to point them to the Cross (vs. 23 & 31-33). For through that Cross, any and all sinners who believe have access into the very Peace and Blessing of God.

Meditate and Pray: Father, may we boast only in you, lifted on the cross. You reveal the depth of our value in the depth of your sacrifice and suffering for us.

Ponder prayerfully the words of this hymn about the Cross (# 258 in the Red Trinity Hymnal):

Sweet the moments, rich in blessing, which
before the Cross I spend, life and health and
peace possessing from the sinner's dying
Friend.

Here I rest, in wonder viewing all my sins on
Jesus laid, here I see redemption flowing from
the sacrifice He made.

Here I find the dawn of heaven, while upon the
Cross I gaze, see my trespasses forgiven, and
my songs of triumph raise.

O that near the Cross abiding, I may to the
Savior cleave, naught with Him my heart
dividing, all for Him content to leave.

Wednesday: Read John 12:27-30

Glorify His Name

Christ teaches us how to find light in dark places. Despite His anguish at the thought of the Cross, "Now my heart is troubled" (vs. 27), Jesus comforts Himself with the knowledge that even His suffering would result in Glory for His Father. Moreover, the Father confirms the Glory that will issue from Calvary by declaring openly in John 12:28 that He would glorify His Name (vs. 28) through the events of Christ's Passion. Jesus could rest in His Father's assurance that Glory would flow from the darkness of those three hours on the Cross. He wants us to rest in such Glory too. After all, this voice promising Glory, is, as John 12:30 says, "for our benefit."

Meditate and Pray: Do we strive to make the Cross such an abiding place of rest, sweetness and even delight? Too often Christ's saving work on the Cross can be taken for granted by those who assume they grasp the basics of what went on there. But the Cross is not just for simple minds, nor is it merely a piece of jewelry or a religious symbol. The Cross is life for the believer, and the wounds which Christ suffered on it are powerful proof of our standing in heaven. May the Lord make the following words from hymn # 708 (v. 4) true for us this week:

*O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
and from the ground there blossoms red
life that shall endless be."*

Thursday: Read John 12:27-33 and Luke 9:28-31

Glory in the Cross

In John 12:28, God the Father reassures His Son that all through all of His ministry He has fully revealed the glory of His Father. Surely the Transfiguration comes to mind as one example where the Father had already revealed his Glory. The three disciples saw the sparkling whiteness of His Son's Glory and spoke in testimony to Peter, James and John: "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to Him" (Luke 9:35). Yet even at that moment of great Glory, the topic of conversation on that mount between Jesus and two Old Testament prophets (Moses and Elijah) is all to do with His upcoming death, Luke 9:31. They spoke about His "departure" (literally "exodus") in Jerusalem.

Meditate and Pray: We can do no better than Moses and Elijah. After waiting for hundreds of years to see the Promised Coming of Jesus, their focus was all upon the saving work which Jesus was to accomplish at Jerusalem on the Cross. We must make sure that we glory in the Cross as they did. Let us not become distracted with the world's continual problems. War, terrorism, poverty, social injustice and nation-building (or nation-destruction) are problems that will torment this world until the end of time. We are to fix our minds on the Glory of what Jesus has accomplished on the Cross. May we resolve with Paul to "know nothing...except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Fri/Sat: Read John 12:20-33

The Reason God the Father loves the Son

We end this week by going back to Jesus' initial meeting with Greek pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem in honor of Passover (John 12:20-22). As TableTalk magazine points out, these men are called Greeks *not* because of their ethnicity, but because of their language and culture. They were Hellenized, which means they used the Greek language and lived according to its culture. As either converts to Judaism or proselytes adopting the ethics and monotheism of Judaism, they were drawn by the Holy Spirit to seek Jesus. Jesus' response to their request is two-fold. First, He declares that the hour has come for Him to be "glorified" (John 12:23).

Second, He tells them about *the manner by which such glorification will take place*. The glory Christ seeks is falling into the ground to die as the beginning of a new harvest of salvation. In other words, it is the fruit of salvation that will come from His sacrificial death and resurrection which will bring glory to God, as the God of not the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.

Jesus goes on to speak explicitly about the Cross in verses 32-33. Jesus came to earth to be planted in the ground by death on the Cross. This explains why every time the crowds expressed carnal zeal for Jesus as the "Christ" (John 12:34) and tried to make Him king (John 6:15), He "hid Himself from them" (John 12:36). But when it came time to present Himself for death, He openly met His captors. He was determined to lay down His life voluntarily, though "no one could take it from Him" (John 10:18). His every action was all for the sake of His love for us.

Meditate and Pray: Savior, do I love You for the same reason that your Father's heart was so full of affection for You? "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my lif," (John 10:17). Show me my heart. Savior, Do I make enough of the Cross as the center of my joy? Amen.

May we enter more and more into the Cross-appreciating spirit of hymn #255 from our Trinity Hymnal:

*"O Jesus, we adore thee, upon the cross, our King!
We bow our hearts before thee, thy gracious name we sing.
That name hath brought salvation, that name in life our stay,
our peace, our consolation, when life shall fade away."*

*"Yet doth the world disdain thee, still passing by the cross;
Lord, may our hearts retain thee; all else we count but loss.
Ah, Lord, our sins arraigned thee, and nailed thee to the tree:
our pride, our Lord, disdained thee; yet deign our hope to be."*

Sunday: Read Acts 1:21-26; Acts 2:32; Acts 17:18 & 1 Corinthians 9:1

The Glory of the Resurrection

We have celebrated in this week's notes the glory of Christ's Cross. Never forget the final glory of Christ's Resurrection which gave life, power and hope to the Apostles' preaching and witness before the world.

In the earliest days of Christianity an "apostle" was first and foremost a man who claimed to be an eye-witness of the Resurrection. Only a few days after the Crucifixion when two candidates were nominated for the vacancy created by the treachery of Judas, their qualification was that they had known Jesus personally both before and after His death and could offer first-hand evidence of the Resurrection in addressing the outer world, (Acts 1:22). A few days later St. Peter, preaching the first Christian sermon, makes the same claim – "God raised Jesus, of which we all (we Christians) are witnesses" (Acts 2:32). In the first Letter to the Corinthians St. Paul bases his claim to apostleship on the same ground – "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen the Lord Jesus?" (1 Cor. 9:1.)

As this qualification suggests, to preach Christianity meant primarily to preach the Resurrection. Thus people who had heard only fragments of St. Paul's teaching at Athens got the impression that he was talking about two new gods, Jesus and Anastasis (i.e. Greek for Resurrection) (Acts 17:18). The Resurrection is the central theme in every Christian sermon reported in the Book of Acts. The Resurrection, and its consequences, were the "gospel" or good news which the Christians brought..."

C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*

Meditate and Pray: Thank God for the truth of Resurrection imbedded by God in the heart of Christian faith. All Christians agree: If dead men are not raised, then there is no Savior named Jesus, no judgment to come, and no eternal inheritance. Ask God to give your church new boldness to declare this Resurrection Gospel and new boldness in prayer, believing that the real answer to all our prayers is nothing less than the drawing near of the Risen Lord Jesus. He speaks to us through the Scriptures as He spoke to the first disciples: "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?" (Luke 24:38.) Lord, dispel these doubts in your presence.