

FATHER SAVE ME FROM THIS HOUR

Every once in a while, when I read the scripture, I come across a passage that seems strange to me. I suppose that's inevitable given that I'm trying to interpret a document that is nearly 2,000 years old. This passage is one of them that strikes me as strange.

In the passage, some Greeks come to the Disciple Philip and say, "We want to see Jesus." Philip then takes the request to the Disciple Andrew. The two Disciples then go together to make the request of Jesus.

Jesus responds in a strange manner. He doesn't address the request or even acknowledge it. That leads me to a question. Why not? Did Jesus think that the Greeks were unimportant? Was he trying to tell the Disciples they should be focused on something else? Maybe the author thoughtlessly put together two stories that shouldn't have gone together, so that we get this strange reading. We don't really know. What we know is that the Greeks are never mentioned again.

The closest I can come to answering that question is to point out the first sentence that comes out of Jesus' mouth. "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." I don't know why he responds that way, but I think it's important that we focus on what he says here. He continues, "Truly, Truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies it remains alone, but if it dies it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there my servant will be also; if anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."

Then Jesus said, "Now my soul has become troubled; and what shall I say. 'Father, save Me from this hour'? "

Now, I could talk about the theological implications of this passage. Every Christian is taught from an early age that Christ died on the cross so that we might have life eternal. It would be easy to say that Christ is referring to his own crucifixion and resurrection with this passage. But I don't think that is what Jesus is saying here.

The reason I say that is that Jesus didn't give up his life so that he could have life eternal. He gave up his life so that we could have life eternal. While it's true that he bore much fruit through his death and resurrection, everything he did from conception to resurrection and beyond bore fruit. So, in this passage I do not think he was talking about himself.

I think he was actually talking about those who follow him. Let me ask you this. What would you be willing to sacrifice to follow Jesus? You know what, we'll come back to that.

Did you ever notice that life can be difficult? Sometimes life gives you lemons. The last five years have been difficult for me. My best friend from High School committed suicide, and I still don't know why. His name was Allen. Every once in a while, I think about Allen, and I wish I could talk to him. I wish I could tell him how much I loved him. I wish he had talked to me so I could help him deal with whatever led him to that choice. But he's gone, and I missed that chance.

The next year the pandemic came around and at roughly the same time we discovered that our house had major water damage. Of course, the colleges shut down, so Laura and Rachel had to come home, and we all lived in a house with no functioning kitchen.

Shortly thereafter, my mother-in-law became ill and had to move in with us. She's been steadily declining ever since.

I could keep going, but I think I have made my point. Things certainly didn't turn out the way I had planned. Each setback was a death in its own right. Each represented the death of someone or something that was important to me: the death of a lifelong friend, the death of financial security, the death of freedom, the death of plans I had laid.

But Christ says that when a seed falls to earth and dies it bears much fruit. I don't know exactly what God has in mind for me. What I do know is that in all things God works for good. I'm sure God has a plan. I may not understand what God is doing right now, I may not ever understand. But I have faith that God is working for good somehow, even if I don't get it.

Why do I have that kind of faith? Because I have seen how God can work miracles, even when things seem to be a mess. I can't say that I have never prayed for God to save me from this hour. In fact, I have prayed that prayer many times. I'm afraid I'm not nearly as strong as my lord Jesus.

What I do know is that if I have to face that hour, I won't have to face it alone. The Holy Spirit will be there with me, helping me to bear the moment. Perhaps, I will understand, perhaps I will even learn something from it. Perhaps, I won't but while God may not save me from the hour, he has already saved me from my sins.

God may not save you from your hour either. But God loves you, and God will save you from your sins.