**A reading from The Gospel of John Chapter 12,**

**beginning to read at verse 20**.

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. 21 They came to Philip,

 who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him,

 **‘Sir, we wish to see Jesus.’**

22 Philip went and told Andrew;

 then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

23 Jesus answered them,

**‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.**

**24 Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain;**

**but if it dies, it bears much fruit.**

**25 Those who love their life lose it,**

**and those who hate their life in this world**

**will keep it for eternal life.**

**26 Whoever serves me must follow me,**

**and where I am, there will my servant be also.**

**Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.**

**27 ‘Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say –**

**“Father, save me from this hour”?**

**No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.**

**28 Father, glorify your name.’**

Then a voice came from heaven,

**‘I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.’**

SERMON:

“Some Greeks came to see Jesus.”

Why did John mention this detail?

* It was near the end of Jesus' life.
* The chief priests and Pharisees had given orders for Jesus' arrest.
* Jesus had come into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey,
to the cheers of the crowd.
* Mary had anointed his body for burial.

Then, John says, some Greeks came to Philip, saying,

**"Sir, we wish to see Jesus."**

When Philip and Andrew told Jesus that the Greeks wanted to meet him, Jesus responded by saying,

**"The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified"**

That seems pretty mysterious, What do we make of it?

Perhaps, the coming of these Greeks signals that the whole world is coming to follow Jesus.

Until this moment,

God had been the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,

but not the God of the whole world.

Perhaps the arrival of these Greeks near the end of Jesus' life was saying that the exclusive relationship that the Jews had always enjoyed with God would no longer be,

"For God so loved Israel," but

**"For God so loved the world."**
Also, when Jesus said,

**"The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified,"**

he meant that the time had come for him to die, but his pathway to that glory would be through the cross.

Jesus gives this little parable:

"Most certainly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat

falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone.

But if it dies, it bears much fruit"

That's an interesting image, isn't it!

The grain of wheat that says, "No, no! Don't put me in the ground! Don't bury me! Don't let me die!"

never becomes anything.

But the grain that allows itself to be buried so that it sprouts - losing its original form and substance,

and becomes a plant that produces much grain

* So it’s from **the death** of the grain of wheat
that new life is born.
* And it’s in **dying on a cross**

that Jesus will bring new life to the world.

And then Jesus tells us

that what is true for him is true for us as well. He says,

**"He who loves his life will lose it.**

**He who hates his life in this world**

**will keep it to eternal life"**

When he says **that,** he is speaking to **us**.

He is telling us that if we love our life, we will lose it,

but if we hate our life, we will keep it.
**What does he mean?**
We have to be very careful with this idea because it would be very easy to turn it into something very different,

from what Jesus intended.

There are plenty of people around who hate their lives. They say, "I'm not rich enough!" - or "I'm not thin enough!"--or "I'm not smart enough!" - or "I'm not popular enough!" And so they conclude, **"I hate my life!"**

That's almost a teenage mantra, isn't it, but it's not limited to teenagers. There are plenty of people who hate their lives--because they hate their job -or hate their boss -or hate getting up in the morning - or hate having too many kids and too little money -- or whatever!

But that's not what Jesus was talking about.

In fact, that's the opposite of what Jesus was talking about.
Jesus wasn't saying that we should be self-centred.

He was talking about people who are the opposite,

of self-centred.

Jesus was talking about people who care so little about the things of this world that they can follow in his footsteps - people who live their lives in service to others - people who make sacrifices for the cause of Christ - people whose lives are centred on **giving** instead of taking.

In 1946, the American author, John Hersey, published a book describing the experiences of six survivors of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima. One was a Methodist pastor named Kiyoshi Tanimoto. He had travelled from a nearby village away from the centre of the explosion.

Here is an excerpt of Hersey’s account of Pastor Tanimoko’s experience:

*Mr. Tanimoto found about twenty men and women on the sandspit. He drove the boat onto the bank and urged them to get aboard.*
*They did not move and he realized that they were too weak to lift themselves.*
*He reached down and took a woman by the hands,*
*but her skin slipped off in huge, glove-like pieces.
He was so sickened by this that he had to sit down*

*for a moment.*
*Then he got out of the water and, though a small man,*
*lifted several of the men and women who were naked into the boat.*
*He remembered their burns: yellow at first,
then red and swollen, and finally by evening,*

 *coated with puss and smelly.*
*With the tide risen , his bamboo pole was not too short
and he had to paddle his way across the river.*
*On the other side, at a higher spit,
he lifted the slimy living bodies out*
*and carried them up the slope away from the tide.*
*He had to keep consciously repeating to himself,*
***‘These are human beings ‘****.”*

**We** are human beings.

We are sons and daughters of Adam and Eve.

We are created in the image of God, but we are fallen creatures, sinful.

As theologians tell us, it is impossible for us not to sin.

It is not just dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima . We are caught in a web of sin, in our work or at school, in our relationships with family and friends,

even in our religious life.

The Bible explains the human predicament very simply but profoundly - God is righteous and holy.

we are unrighteous and sinful. We are by nature sinful and unclean but we are also precious in God’s sight.

Almighty God will judge us by our deeds, and no one will be able to withstand the judgment.

But God is also our Saviour who, through Christ,

does not condemn but blesses us.

Almighty God took our sin and died for it.

What we could never do, God has done for us.

Jesus put it this way:
**"He who hates his life in this world will keep it to eternal life. If anyone serves me, let him follow me.
Where I am, there will my servant also be.
If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him"**

In this Lenten season, we are asked to examine our own life. Am I one of those people who thinks, "I hate my life!"

Am I unhappy because I’m not rich enough - or thin enough - or talented enough - or sexy enough - or whatever?

If so, the world has all sorts of answers for me.

It says, "Use this toothpaste!" or "Buy this car!"

or "Take this holiday!"

The world will tell me that the answer is to become more self-centred - more grasping - more of a pleasure-seeker.

But Jesus will tell you the exact opposite. His prescription is that the only life worth living is a life of **self-giving**.
Jesus said,

**"If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him."**

Let’s believe it, because it's true!

Let’s do it, and receive the blessing that Jesus promised!