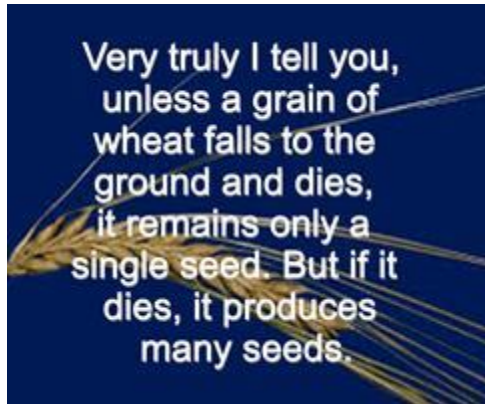


## Palm Sunday Evening 13th April 2014 Kenneth Gray, John 12: 20-36 - “Walk while you have the light”



Celebrities today constantly court popularity. They advertise themselves through the various social media and their followers achieve a sense of connectedness with them by e-mailing, blogging, tweeting and posting messages on Facebook and the like. Jesus did not court popularity. When people came to him he challenged them with the truth. Jesus was totally focused on the task God had given him.

Tonight's passage begins with a request to Philip from some Greeks. "Sir" they said "we would like to see Jesus." In some churches these words are printed above the pulpit as a reminder to the preacher to be faithful to God's word when

preaching. These are words we should all ponder. When people look at us, who claim to be his followers, are they able to see something of Jesus in us?

When he has given his followers his message Jesus does not waste any further words "*When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them*". He knew that people wanted to meet him for all the wrong reasons; they were merely curious or they were seeking some sort of 'guru' who would solve all their problems. People continue to seek enlightenment in exotic places and there are trends and even fashions in such seeking.

Kenneth recalled the craze in the 70's for Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, popularised by the Beatles. The Hare Krishna movement had a surge in popularity in the 60s and 70s and the followers wearing orange robes were a common sight in our cities for a time. People are continually looking for a religion or 'movement' that makes them feel good without making too many onerous demands on them. They seem to be saying "Help us find meaning in our lives, solve our problems - but at no cost to ourselves!"

But Jesus says "*Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.*" Jesus' word to people after he came to Jerusalem was that if they wanted to follow him they must die to self.

During Holy Week we will be thinking about the costliness of Easter. We will be thinking about how much Jesus gave of himself and how he epitomizes self-denial and self-giving for others.

The trouble with the Christian church today is that it can give the impression that the Christian life is just the same as other lives with a 'veneer of Christianity' applied to it. But to follow Christ can lead to hardship and sacrifice. Jesus does not compromise his message to the apostles about the real Christian experience – it is sacrificial and demanding. "*Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*"

We can observe how true this is still in some parts of the world today where converts to Christianity are forced to live a very hard and dangerous life. Today in Islamic countries many are being converted to Christianity via Christian radio and for such to make a public proclamation of one's Christian faith is tantamount to suicide. In the UK today it is not so costly to call oneself a follower of Christ but it may not always be so.

Jesus states "*Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? "Father, save me from this hour"? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!*" Note he says 'your name' not 'my name'. This is what our motivation for our self-denial and sacrifice should be – to glorify God not ourselves. We sometimes forget that and concern ourselves more with the good name of the Church or of some

individual.

Sometimes too we say the good or correct thing without really meaning it. Not so with Jesus. Do we really mean what we say to God? Do we really intend and strive to keep the promises we make to him? We may be able to fool our friends but we cannot fool God who sees what is really in our hearts.

*“Then a voice came from heaven, ‘I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.’ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.”*

Kenneth observed that people sometimes say ‘We need more miracles’ imagining that would convince people of God’s power and Truth. But here we see that many heard the voice of God speaking to Jesus - a miracle- yet they did not recognise it.

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“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” “ This verse is a reminder that when we go to glory we will see hosts of people in heaven that Jesus has drawn to himself because they have put their faith in him.

There is power in the Cross to be rediscovered this coming Holy Week. Kenneth recalled the early missionaries who had given some tribesmen the Bible in English and although they could not read it they were converted when they were told about the cross and could look at the picture of the cross on the book’s cover.

Jesus warned them *“You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you.”* He said this because he was the Light of the world and would soon be gone from the earth. For over two thousand years people have preached the gospel who never knew Jesus in the flesh. In this passage people were listening to Jesus himself yet they chose to dismiss his message and reject him. It is almost unbelievable.

As Christians we must encourage people to respond to the Truth because the clock is ticking. Let us therefore pray for everyone who will attend the services during Holy Week, pray that they will realise God is calling them.