



Queen Anne

LUTHERAN CHURCH

Called to Proclaim God's Love in Christ for Every Person

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✘ *In Worship Today* ✘

Pastor	The Rev. Dr. Dan Peterson
Cantor	Kyle Haugen
Intercessor	Lori Lynn Phillips

This service of worship can also be listened to online on our website.

Go to queenannelutheran.org and click on "WORD OUT" to find audio, video, and print resources for worship at home, as well as resources to use with children.

Visit our YouTube channel for other worship services, educational forums, music and messages for children, and other organ music.

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

March 21, 2021

"Word Out" audio transcript



Prelude

Elevation

François Couperin (1668 -1733)

Welcome

P: Welcome, this fifth Sunday in Lent, to Queen Anne Lutheran Church. Wherever you are listening, whatever challenges you might be facing, we invite you into this space: one where you can hear the good news in proclamation, spoken and sung; a time where you can be still, and know God is God.

In today's Gospel reading we encounter a number of oddities that cry out for explanation: Greeks worshipping the God of the Jews at Passover; Jesus's refusal to speak with those who seek Him; references to his glorification, by way of the most brutal form of execution the Roman mind could imagine. Yet through it all, we still find the good news of a loving God, one who joins us in our suffering. This is the God we worship and glorify, as we gather today in spirit, to acknowledge his presence among us, even as we remain apart.


Greeting

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

G: And also with you.

Gospel Acclamation (*congregation may join*)

John 12:24

☞: 
Let your stead - fast love come to us, O Lord.


Save us as you prom - ised; we will trust your word.



☐: Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

☞: (*as above*) **Let your steadfast love come to us, O Lord. Save us as you promised; we will trust your word.**

The Holy Gospel:

John 12:20-33

☐: The Holy Gospel according to John.

☞: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

☐: ²⁰Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." ²²Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Very 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. ²⁵Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

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. ²⁸Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” ²⁹The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” ³⁰Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

📖: The Gospel of the Lord.

🎤: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Now This is Darn Peculiar
Pastor Dan Peterson

“Now, This is Darn Peculiar!”

There is something peculiar about John 12:20-33, our Gospel reading for today.

In fact, it’s not just *some* thing or *one* thing. It’s three things.

First, we have the appearance, according to v. 20, of Greeks at a Jewish religious festival, who are there presumably to worship not the gods of their pantheon (like Zeus or Apollo) but the God of Israel.

Second, we have their request to see Jesus, which Jesus completely ignores, choosing instead to engage in a monologue about what will soon be his gruesome death as somehow an expression of glory.

Third, we have an acknowledgment which seems totally out of place in John’s Gospel, one where Jesus – instead of being in control of his destiny – admits of the anguish he experiences all the way down to the core of his being.

We can resolve the first two of these peculiarities with a little help from the commentaries, but the third – I believe – needs to remain *unresolved*, a point I will clarify at the end of today’s message.

So, let’s resolve what we can and appreciate what we cannot by looking at the three oddities following Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

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It almost sounds like the first line of a joke: three Greeks walk into a Jewish festival of worship to worship a God in whom they don’t believe. But there it is, the first line of our reading for today (v. 20). Why would these men (the number in the text is actually unspecified) come to worship the God of Israel instead of paying homage to the various gods of the Greek pantheon?

Biblical commentaries offer several possible explanations.

These men could have been Greek-speaking Jews. In that case, however, they would have been no different than Paul, Jesus, or most of the Jews in that region who not only read Hebrew and spoke Aramaic, but who also spoke Greek – the language of trade and commerce. The designation of “Greek” accordingly suggests otherwise.

Perhaps these men were “God-fearing” gentiles (non-Jews) who came to Jerusalem to worship at Passover (*New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 971). After all, “it was not uncommon for gentiles to attend the temple; indeed, Herod’s temple included a Court of the Gentiles” (*New Testament Fortress Commentary on the Bible*, p. 290). These were men, probably uncircumcised, who were not fully incorporated into Jewish worship life and practice, yet who worshipped and glorified the God of Israel. Their appearance, as multiple commentaries suggest, hints at the broadening of Jesus’ mission.

Remember what Jesus says in v. 32: when he is “lifted up from the earth” (i.e., crucified), he will draw “**all people**” to himself – that includes the “people of the nations,” the gentiles, who will be “grafted in,” as Paul says in Romans 11, to the people of God, so that *all* will be saved!

**

One can imagine how the expansion of God's salvific plan to include gentiles would be exciting to hear, especially for God-fearing Greeks who otherwise resided on the fringes of the Jewish faith. Not surprisingly, they want to hear more, which brings us to our second peculiarity.

According to John 12:21, the Greeks in our story approach Philip who comes from Bethsaida in Galilee. That's an important detail. Bethsaida was place where "Jew and Gentile intermingled" (*Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*, p. 721; cf. John 1:44, 6:5-8), so it would not be unusual for them to engage Jesus' followers and request to speak with Jesus himself.

What is unusual is Jesus' response: he completely ignores them! When Philip and Andrew share their request, Jesus "answers" them by launching into a monologue about his forthcoming death! "The question of whether gentiles can be part of this new movement is therefore postponed until after Jesus' death" (*Fortress*, *ibid.*). So much for the mission to the gentiles!

John's audience, however, may have understood something we do not. If these Greeks are representative of the broader Greek world of the mid-to-late first century (*Interpreter's*, *ibid.*), then it's possible Jesus ignores them for a reason the author never explains – or rather, never *needs* to explain.

Consider Paul's experience of the "men of Athens" according to Acts 17: "Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time on nothing but telling or hearing something new" (v. 21). These are people who argue just to argue!

Now come back to where we are in the Jesus story. He has no more time to engage in (useless) debate. The time has come for Son to be glorified by the Father, and so he turns away from the noise and clamor of the world, setting his sight on the site of the cross.

**

We have "resolved" or at least addressed two peculiarities in John 12:20-33. We learned that it was not uncommon for God-fearing Greeks, men and

women who had abandoned the pantheon of Zeus to worship Yahweh, the God of Israel, even if they were not fully admitted into the Jewish faith.

We also learned at least one reason for why Jesus ignored the request of these Greeks to see him.

Perhaps they were more than merely God-fearing.

Perhaps they indulged in arguing for the sake of arguing.

Yet the time for debate, Jesus seems to be implying, has passed. Now the Son must be glorified, raised up on the cross for **all people** as a radical demonstration of God's love, of how far God will go in what the theologian Douglas John Hall calls "God's loving search for lost, alienated humanity" (*Why Christian*, p. 115).

Only through death, we discover, can God reveal such love, which is why he died for you: not to pay off the debt of your sins to a bloodthirsty God, but to show you who and what he is. 1 John 4:8 and 16 condense that revelation into three simple words: "God is love."

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There is a third and final peculiarity to which we come in our Gospel reading for today that cannot and should not be resolved. "Now," says Jesus in v.27, "my soul is troubled."

It's strange, at least for John's version of Jesus. After all, this is the Jesus who says on the cross "It is accomplished" rather than "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me," as we read in Matthew and Mark.

This is also the Jesus who demonstrates his awesome power by bringing a man back to life after four days of rotting in a tomb, not the Jesus of Mark who struggles and even fails on multiple occasions to perform miracles due to the people around him and their unbelief (cf. especially Mark 6:1-6).

And yet – and yet – this is the Jesus, the Word made flesh (John 1:14) whose vulnerable humanity glimmers momentarily in v. 27. "Now my soul is troubled," he says, echoing Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who speak,

for example, of how Jesus anguished in Gethsemane over his inevitable death, so much so that “his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground” (Luke 22:44).

This is the Jesus who, at one other point in John, wept over the death of his friend Lazarus.

And this is the man who joins us when **we weep**, a “fellow-sufferer who understands,” as the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead put it: the truly incarnate Son of God.

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Dear friends in Christ,

All of us have had, may now have, or will have moments in life where, like Jesus, our “souls are troubled” – moments, for example, where we agonize over a medical diagnosis.

Jesus won’t take those moments away from us, but he will join us in them. He knows what it’s like. Even when we walk through the valley of death, we shall fear no evil, for Christ is with us, God is with us. We are not alone.

Sure, there are definite peculiarities in our Gospel reading for today, but there is also good news.

May Christ comfort you, may His spirit be with you, and may even his troubled words console you.

Amen.

Hymn of the Day

Seed That in Earth Is Dying

ELW 330



1 Seed that in earth is dy - ing grows in - to ears of
2 We were bap - tized in Je - sus, in - to his death and
3 Seed that in earth is dy - ing ris - es to bear much



grain. Grapes that are crushed in the ves - sel
grave, to res - ur - rec - tion's prom - ise:
fruit. Christ, as we meet at your ta - ble,



turn in - to gold - en wine. God, through this mys - ter - y grant us
praise and e - ter - nal life. Heav - en's own prais - es be - gin here
give us the bread of life. Lord, we do thank and a - dore you!



faith in our deep - est dark - ness, life in our night and death.
where you your - self are near us, deep in our night and death.
Un - ceas - ing praise of the a - ges ris - es from night and death.

Prayers of the Church

A: Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

A: You wash us through and through and remember our sin no more. Make your church a community of forgiveness throughout the world. Give your

people courage to forgive; through them show the world new possibilities. Bless ministries of repentance and reconciliation. Lord, in your mercy,

☞: hear our prayer.

A: You fill the earth – from tiny grains of wheat to the mighty thunder – with your presence, and you call us to attend to your will for all creation. Grant weather that prepares the soil for seeds; protect all from violent storms, flooding, and wildfires. Lord, in your mercy,

☞: hear our prayer.

A: You promise to write your law on our hearts. Guide citizens throughout the world to shape communities that reflect your mercy, justice, and peace, and give them creativity to work for the welfare of all.

Lord, in your mercy,

☞: hear our prayer.

A: You sustain us with your bountiful Spirit. Restore the joy of all who need to know your presence: those who are lonely or feel unforgivable, those who need healing of mind or body, those who are dying, and all who grieve. Lord, in your mercy,

☞: hear our prayer.

A: Jesus calls us to follow him in life and death. Empower this congregation in discipleship. Equip children and teachers in Sunday school, confirmation, and learning ministries. Give us your truth and wisdom and teach us to follow Jesus. Lord, in your mercy,

☞: hear our prayer.

A: For whom and what else do the people of God pray?

A silence is given so that your prayers may be offered.

A: Lord, in your mercy,

☞: hear our prayer.

A: In the cross of Christ, your name is glorified. With all those who have died in Christ, bring us into life everlasting. Lord, in your mercy,

☞: hear our prayer.

A: We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

G: Amen.

Lord's Prayer

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

G: **Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread
and forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever.**

Amen.

Announcements

P: We thank you for joining us for this service. If you would like to hear other services or access the newest edition of the quill, our newsletter. We invite you to go to our website at queenannelutheran.org.

P: Receive now the blessing:

Benediction

A: Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

P: Eternal God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit,
bless and preserve you.

G: Amen.

Dismissal

☞: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

☞: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Fugue in D minor

Christian Friedrich Schale (1713–1800)

About today's music

We continue this Sunday with more meditative or understated organ selections during Lent. Today's postlude is a straightforward *fugue* (a fugue is a musical form with a melody that is exchanged and developed among different parts). This piece, by late German Baroque composer Christian Friedrich Schale, includes a brief introductory prelude and then a 3-part fugue (two parts for the hands and one for the pedals). Schale was also a cellist; the opening notes of the fugue melody sound like three short upward strokes of the cellist's bow. Today's organ prelude is a sequel to last week's selection, which was also from *Mass for the Convents* by French Baroque composer François Couperin. An "organ mass" is a collection of brief pieces based on melodies from the liturgy, played in alternation with sung portions of the service. The *elevation* is the moment at the Eucharist when the elements of bread and wine are lifted up by the celebrant after consecration, a practice retained after the Reformation among many Lutherans. For today's service, we might wish to consider this piece as a meditation on Jesus's words about his elevation upon the cross and its significance: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

—Cantor Kyle