

Palm Sunday

OLD TESTAMENT – Deuteronomy 32:36-39

³⁶ The LORD will judge his people and have compassion on his servants when he sees their strength is gone and no one is left, slave or free. ³⁷ He will say: “Now where are their gods, the rock they took refuge in, ³⁸ the gods who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offerings? Let them rise up to help you! Let them give you shelter! ³⁹ “See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand.

32:17–43 Since the twofold purpose of this song was to prophesy Israel’s apostasy and serve as a witness against them (31:19–22), the two titles “Jeshurun” and “Rock” establish a pattern for the remainder of the song: Jeshurun, i.e., Israel, forsook God, committed idolatry and abominations, and forgot God. The Rock, i.e., God, was stirred to jealousy, provoked to anger against them, would hide His face, and would stir them to jealousy by employing foreign nations to turn them back to Him. (TLSB)

32:35–36 Quoted in part in Heb 10:30 as a warning against rejecting the Son of God. (CSB)

32:35 *It is mine to avenge; I will repay.* Quoted in Ro 12:19 to affirm that avenging is God’s prerogative. (CSB)

32:36 LORD WILL JUDGE – To contend, plead, strive or minister. This is so much about making a decision as it is about restoring a relationship. (QV)

Remembering His covenant, the Lord will deliver His people. God does not desire punishment for punishment’s sake but for the purposes of discipline and growth in faith (Ezk 18:23; cf. 1 Tim 2:3-4; 2 Pt 3:9). (TLSB)

This will be done by punishing those who are only outward members of His people, and by saving those who are found true worshipers of Jehovah. (Kretzmann)

STRENGTH IS GONE – This is when all the earthly props of Israel’s power upon which it relied are taken away. (Kretzmann)

HAVE COMPASSION – Hebrew rachamim, “tender mercy,” “compassion” from the term for “womb,” it pictures the tender love a mother has for her children.

32:37 HE WILL SAY – God goes to great lengths to show people the folly of not worshiping him. In the OT he would point out the foolishness of so in the texts below:

Judges 10:14 “Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them save you when you are in trouble.”

Jeremiah 2:28 “Where then are the gods you made for yourselves? Let them come if they can save you when you are in trouble! For you have as many gods as you have towns, O Judah.”

Jeremiah 11:12 “The towns of Judah and the people of Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods to whom they burn incense, but they will not help them at all when disaster strikes.”

The Lord mocks the false gods pursued by His people. Similarly, Elijah mocked the false prophets who called on the name of Baa on Mt. Carmel (1 Kg 18:1-40) (TLSB)

When He has thus brought punishment upon His people and avenged Himself upon His enemies in their midst. (Kretzmann)

32:39 *no god besides me.* See note on 4:35. (CSB)

Basil the Great says, “In Scripture ‘one’ and ‘only’ are not predicated of God to mark distinction from the Son and the Holy Ghost, but to except the unreal gods falsely so called.” (NPNF2 8:117) Chemnitz says, “There is no other essence, no different in the Deity, than that one and only essence which has thus been revealed. (LTh 1:64) (TLSB)

I put to death and I bring to life. See Isa 45:7 and note. (CSB)

The Lord kills and wounds so that sinners blinded by pride might see the reality that they are wounded and dead in their sin and trust the Lord, who alone heals and makes alive. “When they are idle, negligent, and rebellious in this matter because of the flesh, He rebukes them through the Law. So the Spirit carries out both offices together: He slays and makes alive. He leads into hell and brings up again. For His office is not only to comfort, but also to rebuke (FC SD VI 12) Luther states, “God wants us to regard the evils that we experience as coming to us with His permission....God permits evil to come to us; for it is His will that, when we have been chastened, we cast ourselves at His mercy.” (AE 13:135) (TLSB)

Only through the life, death and resurrection of Christ is there a restoration of a relationship with God. (CSB)

NO ONE CAN DELIVER – Aphrahat “My beloved, have no doubt as to the Resurrection of the dead.... Believe that in the day of Resurrection, your body shall arise in its entirety, and you shall receive from our Lord the reward of your faith, and in all that you have believed, you shall rejoice and be made glad.... When Death heard all these things, amazement seized him, and he sat him down in mourning” (NPNF 2 13:383, 402–3). TLBS)

To Him, as the almighty God, pertains the absolute power over the creatures of His hand. (Kretzmann)

EPISTLE – Philippians 2:5-11

⁵Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! ⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

2:5-11 The Epistle for today is pivotal, providing a bridge from death to life while giving us both promise and reason for following where Christ leads. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

2:5 *Your attitude ... the same as ... Christ.* In spite of all that is unique and radically different about the person and work of Christ (see vv. 6–11), Christians are to have his attitude of self-sacrificing humility and love for others (see vv. 2–4; Mt 11:29; Jn 13:12–17). (CSB)

The Beck Bible is to preferred: “Think just as Christ Jesus thought.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

ESV has “have this mind.” Paul presents the imperative to think with our minds as Christ thought with His. A soul regenerated in Christ’s image (Titus 3:4-7) has the revelation of Christ through the Word. (TLSB)

There is some disagreement over how to translate the word *phroneō*, “to think.” The series of imperatives in the verses preceding may explain why some manuscripts included “for” at the beginning of this verse, understanding that the mind of Christ in us would explain compliance with the imperatives. For our purposes we might let the tension stand and consider the verb as both indicative and imperative. The presence of God’s inspired Word in our lives, confirmed in our Baptism, means that we do have the mind of Christ. The fact that our regenerate, inspired soul dwells within a contrary human nature means that it is imperative that we continually reorient our thinking to match that of our Savior. The verses that follow are Gospel in nature but also provide an insurmountable logic that is effective in Christian apologetics. No other religious system even begins to suggest a parallel to Christ, true God who became incarnate, provided redemption for the whole world, and rose from the dead. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)The more they are in Christ and Christ is in them, the more Christ-like and unselfish they will be in their attitudes and actions. (PBC)

As if the Apostle would say, “All that I asked of all of you is to be meek and humble so as to be of one mind and one soul, all that you see exemplified in the person and conduct of our Lord. I would like to have you cultivate a mind that is similar to the mind found in Christ. (Stoekhardt)

2:6–11 The poetic, even lyric, character of these verses is apparent. Many view them as an early Christian hymn (see note on Col 3:16), taken over and perhaps modified by Paul. If so, they nonetheless express his convictions. The passage treats Christ’s humiliation (vv. 6–8) and exaltation (vv. 9–11).

Note from Colossians 3:16 – *psalms, hymns and spiritual songs*. Some of the most important doctrines were expressed in Christian hymns preserved for us now only in Paul’s letters (1:15–20; Eph 5:14; Php 2:6–11; 1Ti 3:16). “Psalms” refers to the OT psalms (see Lk 20:42; 24:44; Ac 1:20; 13:33), some of which may have been set to music by the church. “Psalm” could also describe a song newly composed for Christian worship (cf. 1Co 14:26, where “hymn” is lit. “psalm” in the Greek text). A “hymn” was a song of praise, especially used in a celebration (see Mk 14:26; Heb 2:12; see also Ac 16:25), much like the OT psalms that praised God for all that he is. A “song” recounted the acts of God and praised him for them (see Rev 5:9; 14:3; 15:3), much like the OT psalms that thanked God for all that he had done. See note on Eph 5:19.

2:6-8 Paul repeats the Greek term *morphe*, “form,” and also uses *schema*, “manner,” or “shape.” The Son of God took human form, a body like ours except without sin. Note how here and elsewhere Paul’s account of Jesus’ life fits readily with the historical accounts in the Gospels. (TLSB)

2:6 What follows is truly a remarkable passage. Here Christ is presented as our model, our example in lowliness. But at the same time this passage is very important for the doctrine of the person and two states of Christ. Christ is our example in lowliness. That’s ethical. But we cannot imitate His states or saving work. This text reminds us of the necessity of preaching the person and two states of Christ. This also reminds us of the necessity of preaching the person and work of Christ for justification and sanctification. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

BEING – *nuparchao* – *come into existence* – (*be present* or *at hand*); expletively, to *exist* (as copula or subordinate to an adjective, participle, adverb or preposition, or as auxiliary to principal verb):—after *behave, live*. – Implies his pre-existent deity, previous to his birth, and his continued deity afterwards.

in very nature God. Affirming that Jesus is fully God (see note on Ro 9:5). (CSB)

We need to be careful here (as many translations are) not to misunderstand “form” (*hē morphē*) as form only without content. The Son of God does not simply bear the form of God. Rather, “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature,

and he upholds the universe by the word of his power” (Heb 1:3); “In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (Col 1:19). The fact that Jesus is God made it both possible and necessary for him to empty himself on our behalf—possible because no one and nothing could ever really strip him of his divine nature, necessary because the essence of his character is love. We see this clearly in John 13, when Jesus sets aside his garments (as he set aside his divine prerogatives) in order to offer the most humble of services, washing his disciples’ feet. Contrast Jesus with the competitive and self-serving nature of people. Our unwillingness to serve others betrays an absence of certainty about our nature. This has only become worse since Darwin and evolutionary deception has stripped humanity of any kind of inherent dignity as the crown of God’s creative work. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

From all eternity Jesus has been one with the Father, truly God. His eternal existence as God is unshakeable and unchangeable. In Jesus’ incarnation the human nature Jesus assumed shared in all the characteristics of His divine nature. The two natures are now perfectly united. After the incarnation the Bible speaks of one divine-human Christ, the God-man. (PBC)

nature. Essential form (see NIV text note), the sum of those qualities that make God specifically God. (CSB)

As the Son of God, Jesus is God (Col 1:15). Not simply appearance. (TLSB)

equality with God. The status and privileges that inevitably follow from being in very nature God. (CSB)

Jesus, as the true Son of God, cannot be less than fully God. He is equal with His Father according to His divine nature. (TLSB)

Jesus is indeed true God, equal with the Father in power, authority and majesty, and He possesses all the characteristics of God. This He clearly demonstrated during His earthly ministry. Here was a man who read the hearts of men, feed multitudes, control the weather, cast out devils, heal the sick and even raise the dead. Those who observed Him at closest range had to declare, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus was and is in very nature God. (PBC)

something to be grasped.† Something to be forcibly retained—the glory Christ had with the Father before his incarnation. But he did not consider that high position to be something he could not give up. (CSB)

The Greek word means “a thing for self-glorification.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

Fully God, He felt no necessity to cling to the honor or privileges that were His as God’s Son (John 13:3-4). God grants us a similar ability ourselves in the service of others, because we are His children too. (TLSB)

aaragmos *plunder* (properly concrete):—robbery. This divine equality was not something Jesus had to steal or even strive for.

In Paul's day victorious generals and other public figures would frequently honor themselves and their achievements by using their "moment in the sun" to erect monuments to themselves and their achievements. Today, too, the great men of the world frequently use the privileges and trappings of their offices to enhance their reputations, further their careers, perhaps even line their pockets. (PBC)

Jesus, though He was God in very nature, did not appear on earth to glorify Himself. He did not look for His own advantage. Nor did He arbitrarily use the divine privileges and powers He possessed to satisfy passing fancies or to gain earthly fame and power. (PBC)

2:7 *made himself nothing*. Lit. "emptied himself." He did this, not by giving up deity, but by laying aside his glory (see Jn 17:5) and submitting to the humiliation of becoming man (see 2Co 8:9). Jesus is truly God and truly man. Another view is that he emptied himself, not of deity itself, but of its prerogatives—the high position and glory of deity. (CSB)

This verse begins the gradual descent of Jesus in his redemptive service to us—first taking the form of a servant, then humbling himself in death, then even lower by dying on a cross (as one accursed from God). Notice once again, that "form of a servant" means really a servant! The whole life of Christ as recorded in the Gospels is one of constant service to others (so that he had no time even to eat). The Son of God's adoption of a human nature is beautifully and fully considered in the Book of Hebrews; because he was human he can sympathize and can be a faithful and merciful High Priest for us (e.g., Heb 4:14–16). "Being found in human form" (v 8) reminds us that Isaiah had prophesied that the Messiah would be so fully human as to be unrecognizable: "He had no form or majesty that we should look at him" (Is 53:2). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

Literally, "emptied Himself." "[The Son of Man] was received into God when He was conceived of the Holy Spirit in His mother's womb, and His human nature was personally united with the Son of the Highest. Christ always had this majesty according to the personal union. Yet He abstained from using it in the state of His humiliation, and because of this He truly increased in all wisdom and favor with God and men. Therefore, He did not always use this majesty, but only when it pleased Him." (FC Ep. VIII 15-16). (TLSB)

The Beck Bible says, "But He emptied Himself, made Himself a slave, became like other human beings. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

During His earthly ministry Jesus emptied Himself of the full and constant use of all the prerogatives of His divinity. He laid aside the unlimited exercise of His power and did not always use or demand His rights as God. (PBC)

nature of a servant. Emphasizes the full reality of his servant identity (see Mt 20:28). As a servant, he was always submissive to the will of the Father. (CSB)

Jesus was, in every way, completely a servant to those around Him. (TLSB)

doulos a *slave* (literally or figuratively, involuntarily or voluntarily; frequently therefore in a qualified sense of *subjection* or *subserviency*):—bond (-man), servant.

It was as if He covered the glory of His divine majesty with the tattered rags of a beggar. He became altogether lowly. He became like every other human being – lowlier, in fact, than most – in His earthly manner of living. Though He Himself was sinless, He assumed human nature in the weakened condition in which have it, burdened with the consequences of sin. Although He is the Lord of the universe, He was born in a stable. He never possessed earthly property or wealth. He was despised by many of His contemporaries. He placed Himself under the demands of God’s law. (PBC)

BEING MADE IN HUMAN LIKENESS – Not mere resemblance. He was conceived as a man like any other man, except without sin. (TLSB)

2:8 *appearance as a man.* Not only was Jesus “like” a human being (v. 7), but he also took on the actual outward characteristics of a man (see Jn 1:14; Ro 8:3; Heb 2:17). (CSB)

Jesus shared all the characteristics of a human being. (TLSB)

humbled himself. See v. 7; 2Co 8:9. (CSB)

The Son of God humbled himself; true love is given freely and at one’s own expense. Even as the Son of God did not think equality with God something to cling to selfishly, so also he did not think that he was above enduring death for the sake of his beloved ones. Now we see that this process of humbling himself to effect our redemption knew no limits, so that he humbled himself even to die the most accursed of all deaths. Mention of the cross here brings up all the significant imagery of the devil, who once overcame by a tree, now being overcome by a tree; the First Adam failing before a tree, the Second Adam winning absolute victory on a tree (Rom 5:12–21); he became accursed so that we might be blessed (Gal 3:13–14). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

obedient. How Jesus humbled himself (cf. Heb 5:7–8). A “servant” (v. 7) obeys. (CSB)

Jesus put all His thoughts, words, and actions under the direction of His Father's will. (TLSB)

to death. Stresses both the totality and the climax of Jesus' obedience. (CSB)

In a person of Christ, God truly died. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

on a cross. Heightens Jesus' humiliation; he died as someone cursed (see Gal 3:13; Heb 122). Crucifixion was the most degrading kind of execution that could be inflicted on a person.(CSB)

stauros – a *stake* or *post* (as set upright), that is, (specifically) a *pole* or *cross* (as an instrument of capital punishment); figuratively *exposure to death*, that is, *self denial*; by implication the *atonement* of Christ:—cross. – The kind of death he submitted himself to amazes believers, confounds unbelievers: this was the style of execution reserved by the Romans for slaves, foreigners, and barbarians – never Roman citizens.

The most despised and cursed death. According to OT Law, being hung on a tree meant you were cut off from God. You were left there all day as an example to others (cf. Dt. 21:22-23). The Romans crucified criminals by the main entry roads into a city in order to humiliate them and to warn those who entered not to make the same mistake. (TLSB)

In OT Israel, after a wrongdoer had been put to death, the civil laws prescribed that his dead body be nailed to a post or a tree. This was to impress on the people that that individual, by his transgression, had suffer the ultimate curse of being cut off from God and His believing people. If in the sight of God, than hanging of a dead body signified His curse, how much more would the hanging of a living person be considered a curse, especially when that person was experiencing anguish beyond description. How deliberately and heavily the words fall as the apostle describes the ultimate humiliation of the God-man: EVEN DEATH ON A CROSS. (PBC)

2:9 THEREFORE - *dio*, “therefore; that is why.” The first word of this verse is the pivot and shows the proper relationship between man (in this case the Son of Man) and God: man humbles himself in submission to God and love of neighbor, and God exalts man as is right. What we give away for the benefit of others God restores again, but if we would keep what God has given, how can God give any more to us? Remember that “name” (*to onoma*) is not just an empty title, but includes all the power and prerogatives of a being. Jesus is not only Creator but also now Redeemer. This truth is the basis and justification of v 10. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

exalted. See Mt 28:18; Ac 2:33; cf. Isa 52:13. (CSB)

auperupsoo to *elevate above* others, that is, *raise to the highest position*:—highly exalt. (qv)

The Apostle's Creed lists the various events of Jesus' exaltation: "He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." What a glorious victory these words describe. Jesus, our Savior, having successfully completed His redemptive work for us, openly triumphed over the forces of hell. Death had to relinquish its hold on Him. Earth could no longer contain Him. Heaven opened its doors to receive Him. Jesus, our victorious Savior, now holds in His hands the reins of the universe. He rules all things in heaven and on earth in the interest of His believers, and He will come again to end this age, judge the world, and take His believers to be with Him and to share His glory in eternal life. (PBC)

the name ... above every name. Reference doubtless is to the office or rank conferred on Jesus—his glorious position, not his proper name (cf. Eph 1:21; Heb 1:4–5). (CSB)

In ancient times, people were given names to describe them. The name of Jesus describes the essence of who He is: "salvation is of the Lord." There is no other savior or means of salvation. "After His resurrection, He entirely laid aside the form of a servant, but not human nature, and was established in the full use, manifestation, and declaration of the divine majesty. In this way He entered His glory" (FC Ep VIII 16). (TLSB)

His name, spoken with contempt by His enemies, especially by those who condemned Him to death as a blasphemer, is the only "name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Only through Jesus' name, and through faith in His name and the gospel revelation which stands behind it, can sinners be saved. (PBC)

2:10–11 *bow ... confess*. Cf. Isa 45:23. God's design is that all people everywhere should worship and serve Jesus as Lord. Ultimately all will acknowledge him as Lord (see Ro 14:9), whether willingly or not. (CSB)

All created beings must and will confess Jesus as Lord: The saints and angels in heaven, all human beings on earth, even the demons and the damned in hell. (PBC)

God the Father exalts the Son to the place that is rightly his (see last week's Gospel) so that creation relates rightly to him. When every knee bows in submission and every tongue confesses the truth of Christ, then creation will experience paradise. Life is found in God's design. Life is conveyed in the Word of the Lord. When all is right in God's creation for all eternity, then God will be glorified as is proper to him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

Bow is synonymous with worship toward God (Ex. 4:31; 34:8; Ps. 95:6; 1 Sam 1:28; see note Ex 33:10) or respect and service for a human being (Gn. 33:3; 43:26-28; 1 Sam 20:41; 28:14; Est 3:2). God expressly forbade bowing to false gods (Ex 20:4-5). People also bowed to (1) greet someone (Gen 18:2; 19:1), (2) signal humility and repentance (Ezr 9:5; 10:1, and (3) express thanks (Gen 24:52). Bows were done in a variety of ways (1 Ch 29:20; 1 Kg 18:42; Ne 8:6) and likely included tilting the head, tilting the upper body, kneeling with one's face to the ground, or lying prostrate. The more elaborate the bow, the greater the expression of devotion or emotion (Gn. 33:3). (TLSB p. 1276)

UNDER THE EARTH – This is a figure of speech that refers to the souls of those who have gone not to heaven, but to damnation in the “lower regions” (1 Peter 3:18-20). (TLSB)

2:11 JESUS CHRIST IS LORD – An early creed. See p. 1975. Jesus (Greek) or Joshua (Hebrew) is the name given to the Son conceived by the Holy Spirit (Mt. 1:21) in the Virgin Mary. Christ (Greek) or Messiah (Hebrew) is the title of the One whom God promised to send to save His people. This Jesus, who is the Christ, demonstrated Himself to be Lord over all His nature, life, death, and resurrection. No one is Lord over Him, but He is Lord over all. (TLSB)

This verse emphasizes what was said in verse 10. It is a comfort for us to know that every rational creature, be that in heaven, on earth or of the underworld, cannot but make this confession. That says two things to us: (1) God is glorified by the person and work of our Lord Jesus. Therefore Jesus ought have our utmost confidence. (2) With Jesus as our example we ought humble ourselves as Paul here tells us to do. And if we so do, although what we do is so foolish in the eyes of the world, the Lord will not forget us. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

2:1–11 Paul couples the imperatives of a Christian life with a description of Christ, who makes that life possible. We are certainly not lords, nor have we any excuse for refusing to honor Jesus Christ as Lord. Yet the fulfillment of the imperative to live like Christ is supported by all that Christ gives freely: the encouragement, comfort, love, and mind of Christ, along with the participation of the Spirit. • Dear Lord Jesus, place firmly in our minds and hearts both who You are and what You are so that we may proclaim Your grace and image to others. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – John 12:20-43

²⁰ Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” ²² Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. ²³ Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵ The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in

this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. ²⁷ “Now my heart 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. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” ²⁹ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. ³⁰ Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. ³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. ³⁴ The crowd spoke up, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this ‘Son of Man’?” ³⁵ Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. ³⁶ Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light.” When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

12:20-33 The mood of the text is one of somber anticipation. Chronologically, the text occurs between the triumphant entry into Jerusalem and Jesus’ washing of the disciples’ feet. The narrative is rapidly moving to the events of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, so there is an ominous expectancy in this passage. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

The intent of the text is to have the readers seek and serve (v 26) Jesus only as they are drawn to his hour of death, his glorification of being lifted up on a cross. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

12:20-23 It is the coming of the Greeks that is important, not only their conversation with Jesus. The Greeks were probably “God-fearers”—Gentiles attracted to Judaism but not ready to convert and accept the requirements of the Law such as Sabbath observance and circumcision. Some think they could have been actual converts or proselytes. Regardless, they came to worship in Jerusalem during the Passover celebration. On the Jewish Pentecost or Feast of Weeks, there were people in Jerusalem from “every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5) “both Jews and converts to Judaism” (Acts 2:11). The arrival of Gentiles seeking him prompts Jesus to declare that his hour has now come. It is time for him to be glorified in death and resurrection for the whole world. There is no turning back. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

Some commentators are of the opinion that this episode happened in the afternoon of Palm Sunday. It is found only in John and is found right after Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. Others feel that it occurred on Tuesday morning, two days later. In any event, all agree that Jesus was in the Temple. (Buls)

12:20 *Greeks*. Probably “God-fearers,” people attracted to Judaism by its monotheism and morality, but repelled by its nationalism and requirements such as circumcision. They worshiped in the synagogues but did not become proselytes. (CSB)

Probably Greek-speaking Gentiles from a place like the Decapolis. (TLSB)

Greeks" meaning Gentiles. "Who were among those who customarily went up." They were among the God-fearing Gentiles who worshipped in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover. Compare Acts 10:1.22.35; 13:16.26.43.50; 16:14; 17:4.17; 18:7. They came to worship. (Buls)

Certain Greeks there were among the crowds that came up to worship at the feast. They may have been men living in the Decapolis or in Galilee, men of pure Greek extraction, perhaps not even proselytes of the gate; they were heathen. But they had heard of the true God who was adored among the Jews. And they now had ample opportunity to hear also of Jesus, for all men were talking of Him and the great miracle which He had performed. (Kretzmann)

12:21 *Philip*. A Greek name, which may be why they came to this disciple (though he was not the only one of the Twelve to have a Greek name). (CSB)

Perhaps because Philip had a Gk name and came from an area near the Decapolis. (TLSB)

This is narrative. They must have been acquainted with Philip. Bengel suggests that perhaps they always lodged with Philip in Bethsaida on their journey to Jerusalem. They simply request to meet Jesus to become acquainted with Him. This request must have proceeded from faith, for they surely knew that the Jewish authorities hated Jesus. It has been suggested that perhaps these Greeks were in the crowd which went out to meet Jesus, John 12:13, but we don't know. (Buls)

They were acquainted with Philip, since his home was in Bethsaida, and they may have met him often in the North. (Kretzmann)

He was from out of town (Bethsaida, in northern Galilee), so they may have felt more comfortable approaching him. (PBC)

to see. Means “to have an interview with.” After v. 22 John records no more about these Greeks (yet see note on v. 32). He regarded their coming as important but not their conversation with Jesus. Jesus came to die for the world, and the coming of these Gentiles indicates the scope of the effectiveness of his approaching crucifixion. (CSB)

They were acquainted with Philip, since his home was in Bethsaida, and they may have met him often in the North. (Kretzmann)

For that moment, the request was symbolic. They represented the Gentile nations and the fulfillment of the messianic promise of a light for the nations (Isaiah 60:3). It reveals

the desires of people impressed by God's law and made aware of God's Messiah. It is the spirit of Christians to this day who never stop searching the Scriptures to learn of Him. (PBC)

12:22 For some reason, Philip hesitated to speak immediately with Jesus. Here Andrew showed the same missionary zeal he had shown earlier (1:41). (TLSB)

Many commentators quote Bengel who says at this point:

A prelude is here given of the kingdom of God which is about to pass from the Jews (exclusively) to the Gentiles. (Buls)

Farrar: When Jesus was born, Chaldeans from the East had sought His cradle, and now Greeks and sons of the West came to His cross. (Buls)

Fahling: In this request Jesus saw an indication of His glorification, which consisted in His being acknowledged by men of all nations, as had been prophesied. (Buls)

Hendriksen: Andrew and Philip, hesitating to *offend* the Greeks, also hesitating to *encourage* them, place the request of the Greeks before Jesus. (Buls)

Jesus had told His disciples not to go to the Gentiles, Matthew 10:5, and that He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Matthew 15:24. But Jesus Himself had foretold the bringing in of the Gentiles at John 10:16. John 12:20-22 reveals the Greeks, Philip, Andrew and Jesus as very tactful, but forthright nonetheless. A great truth is being introduced. Whether these Greeks actually met Jesus is not stated. (Buls)

Lenski: We hear nothing further about the Greeks. . . John is not telling the story of these Greeks but of Jesus.

Philip did not dare to decide the matter of introducing these Greeks to Jesus alone, so he called upon his fellow-townsmen Andrew to help him decide. What made them hesitate to lay the request of the Greeks before the Lord was probably the prejudice which they, as members of the Jewish Church, had against all Gentiles. The many passages of the Old Testament which speak of the conversion of the Gentiles were at that time hidden before their eyes. But after some consultation the two disciples decided to bring the matter to the attention of the Master. Note: To this day it is often a hard matter for race and language prejudices to be overcome in the work of the Kingdom. It is necessary to be fully and absolutely convinced of the fact that Jesus is the Savior of the whole world in order to carry out one's missionary duty properly. (Kretzmann)

12:23 JESUS REPLIED – This is apparently to Philip and Andrew rather than the Greeks. We are never told whether these Greeks met with Jesus, who is now fully focused on His challenges in Jerusalem. (TLSB)

The hour has come. The hour to which everything else led (see note on 2:4). (CSB)

The antecedent of *is* is the two disciples. "The hour has come" in the sense of the occasion of Jesus' suffering and death was found at John 7:30; 8:20. At this point it occurs in John with greater frequency. Compare 12:27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1. The word "glorified" covers the suffering, death, resurrection and final ascension of the Son of man. The Son of man clothed God in splendor by His atoning work which brings the Gentiles into the Church. (Buls)

Jesus was deeply moved by the request of the Greeks to become acquainted with Him, to know the Savior. It showed Him that the hour, the time, had come when He was to be taken from the world, the culmination of His life's work, His glorification through His suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. (Kretzmann)

Until now, we have become accustomed to hearing that Jesus' hour had not yet come (7:30; 8:20). But now it had. He, the essence of humanity, had come to Jerusalem to die for the lost humanity and rise again in glory. Jesus came to sacrifice Himself for the salvation of the Greek as well as the Jews. (PBC)

glorified. Jesus was speaking about his death on the cross and his subsequent resurrection and exaltation (see notes on v. 41; 11:4; 13:31). (CSB)

12:24-26 The principle of the kernel of wheat is that it must die to produce fruit. Just so, Jesus must die. The fruit is those who look to Christ and eternal life. They refuse to satisfy their desires and needs apart from God's will and follow Jesus in humble service. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

12:24 I TELL YOU THE TRUTH – Here is another "I tell you the truth," so frequent in John, (twenty-four times) introducing a very important statement. (Buls)

if it dies, it produces. The principle of life through death is seen in the plant world. The kernel must perish as a kernel if there is to be a plant. (CSB)

Now follow two present general statements which are axiomatic and paradoxical. To bring out the axiom add "ever" to each protasis and "always" to each apodosis. It is a principle of nature that if a seed does not die, there will be no fruit but that if it dies there will be much fruit. The point of comparison is clear, but applies to Jesus only. No other human being ever produced much fruit by dying, none other than Jesus Christ. His death brought much fruit, especially among the Gentiles. (Buls)

Here begins Jesus' answer to the request of the Greeks. He did not spend His time exchanging amenities with these visitors. He spoke truths for all generations of men. (Buls)

This emphasizes the necessity of Jesus' death as the way to glorification and the blessing of many disciples. According to the time reckoning in John, Jesus rose from the dead on the 16th of Nisan, the day barley firstfruits were offered at the temple. (TLSB)

The Jews Continue in Their Unbelief

³⁷ Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. ³⁸ This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: "Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" ³⁹ For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: ⁴⁰ "He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them." ⁴¹ Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him. ⁴² Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved praise from men more than praise from God. ⁴⁴ Then Jesus cried out, **"When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. ⁴⁵ When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. ⁴⁷ "As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. ⁴⁸ There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. ⁴⁹ For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. ⁵⁰ I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."**

12:37 *they still would not believe.* God's ancient people should have responded when God sent his Messiah. They should have seen the significance of the signs he did. (CSB)

The faith of many on Palm Sunday was fickle. Although Jesus had done His miraculous signs in their presence, including the raising of Lazarus, they continued not to believe in Jesus. (PBC)

12:38 FULFILL THE WORD OF ISAIAH – Anticipating these days, the prophet Isaiah had asked, "Who has believed our message?" (53:1). Even though the Pharisees feared Jesus' popularity, in reality the people were rejecting Jesus' teaching. (PBC)

As Isaiah foretold, the people believed neither the message nor Jesus' signs (cf. 14:10-11). (TLSB)

12:39-40 As in the days of Isaiah, God's judgment locked people in their unbelief. They would not believe, so they are condemned to become those who could not believe. (TLSB)

12:39 *could not believe.*† They purposely rejected God and chose evil, and v. 40 explains that God in turn brought on them a judicial blinding of eyes and hardening of hearts. Yet many Jewish leaders did believe in Jesus as the Messiah (v. 42). (CSB)

Many of these people, especially the Jewish leaders, had become hardened in their hearts against Jesus. They didn't acknowledge the arm of God at work in His miracles. Finally, as He once did with Pharaoh at the time of Israel's exodus from Egypt, God blinded the eyes of those who refused to see and closed the hearts of those who had locked Jesus out. (PBC)

It is said of Joseph's brothers that they could not speak peaceably to him (Genesis 37:4); and Christ said to the Jews, "How can you believe, who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only?" (John 5:44) The two things were incompatible. They must cease from the one in order to do the other. So here; as they continue to love and cherish their sins, they could not, continuing this course, embrace the Messiah. The two things could not coexist. This was the reason why they should have renounced the one, and performed the other. But they would not do it. (CB)

12:40 These words from Isa 6:10 are quoted by Jesus (Mt 13:14–15; Mk 4:12; Lk 8:10) and by Paul (Ac 28:26–27). (CSB)

Referring to what was heard. (TLSB)

God has blinded their eyes by presenting to them truths which they would reject, their rejection bringing them into greater darkness. In a similar sense it is said, that Jesus Christ came into the world to set members of families at variance, by leading some to trust in Him, while others on this account opposed them and sought their death. (Matthew 10:21, 35, 36) (CB)

12:41 *saw Jesus' glory.* Isaiah spoke primarily of the glory of God (Isa 6:3). John spoke of the glory of Jesus and made no basic distinction between the two, attesting Jesus' oneness with God. The thought of glory here is complex. There is the idea of majesty, and there is also the idea (which meant so much to John) that Jesus' death on the cross and his subsequent resurrection and exaltation show his real glory. Isaiah foresaw the rejection of Christ, as the passages quoted (Isa 53:1; 6:10) show. He spoke of the Messiah both in the words about blind eyes and hard hearts, on the one hand, and about healing, on the other. This is the cross and this is glory, for the cross and resurrection and exaltation portray both suffering and healing, rejection and triumph, humiliation and glory. (CSB)

Either directly in a vision or through the prophetic words God gave him. *His glory.* Isaiah either saw the preincarnate Christ or discerned what the Christ would do as the Suffering Servant. (TLSB)

You have heard the familiar verses. Perhaps you have learned them by heart: “He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed” (Is 53:5). “A bruised reed He will not break” (42:3). He “was numbered with the transgressors; yet He bore the sin of many” (53:12). You have sung the familiar hymns: “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded” (*LSB* 449), “Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted” (*LSB* 451), and “A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth” (*LSB* 438). Some of the more familiar Scripture passages are part of the songs of the Suffering Servant. For centuries, hymn writers have mined the rich imagery of the Servant Songs to create hymns of lasting comfort. (TLSB p. 1178)

The Holy Spirit inspired Isaiah to record four separate songs of the Suffering Servant (42:1–9; 49:1–13; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12). With remarkable clarity, 700 years before the Servant was born, Isaiah vividly portrayed His life from manger to grave to resurrection. He wrote how the Servant, born of a virgin, would atone for the sins of the world with His own suffering and death. No other human could fulfill the mission of the Servant. (TLSB p. 1178)

The Servant Is a Humble King

In the Old Testament, the king of Israel, the temple, and the land bear rich theological imagery. We hear of God accomplishing the salvation of His people through His king, dwelling with His people in His temple, and restoring His people to the land promised long ago. Isaiah further defined God’s kingly role as that of a Servant. The Messiah, a royal descendant of King David, would be a King radically different from all previous kings. True, this King would bring forth justice to the Gentiles, even to all the earth (42:1, 4), but He would come quietly and humbly (53:2). This King would come not to be served by His subjects, but to serve them. He would offer His life for all people. (TLSB p. 1178)

In the Servant Songs, God provided His prophet Isaiah a glimpse of the future, far beyond the impending judgment of Jerusalem and exile in Babylon. Isaiah wrote about the day when God Himself would dwell in human flesh with His people to serve them and all nations. For example, in ch 49, the Servant Himself speaks of His commission to bring salvation to Israel and to be a light to the Gentiles. He would take the sins of the world—past, present, and future—upon Himself and offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice to make satisfaction for that sin. (TLSB p. 1178)

A King like No Other

This King would not draw attention to Himself (42:2). Subjected to great humiliation (52:14), His appearance would startle and amaze other kings (52:15). Despised and rejected by people, He would be a man of sorrows, a man not highly esteemed (53:3). When accused, this innocent King would not defend Himself but would stand silent (53:7). The King would “bring forth justice to the nations” (42:1) in what would appear to be a gross miscarriage of justice, since the guilty would be released and the innocent condemned to die (53:8). (TLSB p. 1178)

Scorned by His own people, the Suffering Servant would be worshiped by princes. Despised by the common man, kings would arise to see Him (49:7). This King would be smitten, stricken, and spat upon (53:4). He would be bruised, berated, and beaten (53:5). He would turn His cheek to allow His beard to be pulled and plucked (50:6). Although innocent of violence and deceit, He would be killed with criminals and buried with the wicked and the rich (53:9). Who is like this Servant King? (TLSB p. 1178)

Set Apart by the Father

Is 42:1 records the Father's introduction of this Suffering Servant and His work: "Behold My servant, whom I uphold, My chosen, in whom My soul delights; I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations." This Servant is the Father's singular chosen Servant. The Father unhesitatingly acknowledges Him. He is the One elected by the Father for this unique position of honor. He is the One in whom the Father greatly delights. Knowing the difficulty of the mission He has assigned to this Servant King, the Father confers His Spirit on Him to equip Him for His peculiar work. (TLSB p. 1178)

Centuries after Isaiah completed his prophetic work, when John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River, the Father's voice boomed from heaven with reference to the Servant Song, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Mt 3:17; cf Is 42:1). The Spirit descended from the heavens in the form of a dove and came to rest upon the Son (cf Is 42:1). Later (Lk 4:18), the Suffering Servant began His public ministry by reading the words of Is 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me." Then He proclaimed, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:21). Later, when the Servant turned to Jerusalem and His bloody mission on the cross, the Father again affirmed His pleasure with His Son and His work by saying, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Mt 17:5). (TLSB p. 1178)

The Servant Suffers for You

"But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed" (Is 53:5). With these poetic words, Isaiah drives the prophecy home. He explains why it was necessary for the Servant King to suffer. The almighty God took on human flesh in order that He might be humiliated, tortured, and killed to take away your sins! He was wounded—for you. He was crucified to bring about peace with God—for you. Through His work as the Suffering Servant, He brings healing—for you. Who is like this Servant King? Who is like this God? (TLSB p. 1178)

Tell me, ye who hear Him groaning,
Was there ever grief like His?
Friends through fear His cause disowning,
Foes insulting His distress;
Many hands were raised to wound Him,
None would intervene to save;
But the deepest stroke that pierced Him
Was the stroke that justice gave. (*LSB* 451:2)

There is no other God who loves and forgives like your God (Mi 7:18). He is the Suffering Servant King who died for you, that you might live eternally like a king with Him. (TLSB p. 1178)

12:42 *many ... leaders believed.* John does not give a picture of unrelieved gloom. Many Jewish leaders believed (see note on 1:7), though they remained secret believers for fear of excommunication (see note on 9:22). (CSB)

E.g., Nicodemus (3:1-21) and Joseph of Arimathea (19:38). (TLSB)

BECAUSE OF THE PHARISEES – Pharisees controlled Jewish synagogues. Few dared to oppose them, for fear of being ostracized. (TLSB)

They hid their real views for fear of being put out of the synagogue. They could not face the humiliation of that, valuing their reputation among the people more than their need

to give glory to God. They still loved glory that comes from men more than the glory that comes from God in Christ. We should not be surprised at this cowardice in faith. Our own lives display it today. How often do we Christians fail to confess our faith because we fear the reaction of those around us? (PBC)

12:36b–43 Some Jews reject Jesus and, under God’s judgment, are hardened in unbelief; others believe in Him but refuse to confess Him openly for fear of being removed from the synagogue community. The desire to be accepted by others can stand in the way of a Christian’s bold confession of Christ today. Yet, take heart. God has revealed His saving presence (His glory) in the person of His Son, that we may glorify Him before all people. • Lord, may I “tell of [Your] salvation from day to day” (Ps 96:2). Amen. (TLSB)