

The Son of Man must be lifted up

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Palm Sunday) is John 12:20-43. This text has three different segments. First is that of Greeks seeking Jesus. Second is where Jesus once more tells his disciples that he must suffer and die. And, the third deals with the unbelief of the people listening to him. I will focus on the second section.

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.

Jesus' soul is troubled of what He is about to suffer because of all men's sins. "Is troubled" is perfect tense because Jesus' soul has been disturbed for some time but the intensity is growing as He approaches His death. This is John's equivalent to the agony in Gethsemane described in the other Gospels.

Still the God-man never wavered from His assigned path. He did not cry out in human frailty for the Father to save Him from His ordeal. He had come from heaven for this very purpose, prepared for this time. He was there to bring glory to God.

The Father had already glorified Christ through His incarnation and earthly ministry (especially miracles and signs); now He was about to glorify Him again through His death and resurrection. (TLSB)

Only in John's Gospel is "lifted up" used of Jesus' crucifixion. "Draw" is used of dragging dead weight, e.g. beaching ships or dragging a net of fish to the shore. Jesus used it again and again in John 6 of the Father "dragging" (drawing) people to Jesus. They cannot do it by their own powers.

This is the drawing exerted by grace through the means of grace (Word and Sacrament), alike in effectiveness and seriousness for all men, not in any way limited on God's part. . . Jesus is speaking of this universal and unlimited grace only in so far as it succeeds in actually drawing men from the world to himself.

Not that everyone in the world would enter heaven, but Christ would make atonement for everyone's sins and draw people out of every nation to form His Church. (TLSB)

By the faith worked in us by the Holy Spirit we are among those who have been drawn to the lifted up Christ.

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for being willing to suffer and die on the cursed cross. Thank you for the faith that you have given me by your generous grace. Help me to continue strengthen it by the use of your gifts of Word and Sacraments. Amen