

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

The Hour Has Come
John 11:55-57; 12:20-37, 44-50

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader:

If the youth will be meeting separately for application of the Bible study, have a white board or large piece of paper for them to use.

Worship Time Leader:

Music Sources:

Here I Am to Worship, *The Worship Hymnal* #120; CCLI #3266032

How Deep the Father's Love For Us, *The Worship Hymnal* #101; CCLI #1558110

Grace Greater than Our Sin, *The Worship Hymnal* #105; CCLI #31690 Public Domain

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus, *The Worship Hymnal* #434; CCLI # 5077724 or 2151540

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***The Hour Has Come*****Focal Text**

John 11:55-57; 12:20-37, 44-50

Background Text

John 11:55—12:50

Main Idea

Jesus offered himself to draw all people—including us—to him, challenging us to decide whether we will follow him.

Question to Explore

What does Jesus' offer of himself 2000 years ago mean for you today?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to describe the significance for their lives of Jesus' offering himself to draw all people to him.

Gathering together:

Sing:

Here I Am to Worship, *The Worship Hymnal* #120; CCLI #3266032

First thoughts:

Hosanna!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessed is the King of Israel!

These were the words which the crowd chanted as Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey, a symbol of a peaceful ruler. There was great excitement that day; the people were well aware of the many miracles which Jesus had performed. The news of

Lazarus being raised from the dead was spread from person to person. These people had been oppressed by the Romans; they hoped for a leader who would free them from that oppression. The King of Israel that they desired was far different from the servant king riding a donkey and entering Jerusalem knowing that his death was imminent. The title for our study and worship today is "The Hour Has Come". We have noted throughout the study of the book of John the words, "his hour had not yet come". Now it is time to see that all of the events of Jesus' life had led up to what would happen at this Passover time. Now the hour has come. The Hour Has Come – what do these words mean to you and me as we study today?

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

The Hour Has Come

Focal Text

John 11:55-57; 12:20-37, 44-50

Background Text

John 11:55—12:50

Main Idea

Jesus offered himself to draw all people—including us—to him, challenging us to decide whether we will follow him.

Question to Explore

What does Jesus' offer of himself 2000 years ago mean for you today?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to describe the significance for their lives of Jesus' offering himself to draw all people to him.

Introduction to your personal study:

Be sure to read and study the entire background text for the lesson. Everything is important, but limitations of time make it essential to focus on only certain verses for the teaching time. But for your own preparation, do not fail to study the entire section.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series (Bible Teaching #....) of Bible Study and Worship sessions. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

Focusing on the Meaning:

John 11:55-57

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple area they asked one another, "What do you think? Isn't he coming to the Feast at all?" But the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so that they might arrest him.

Jesus knew that the threat from the Sanhedrin was real so he went away into the wilderness until the time should come for his crucifixion. He went to the deserted hill country fifteen miles northeast of Jerusalem to a place called Ephraim. The "hour" for his sacrificial death would be the Father's timing, not due to the scheming of men.

The Passover mentioned in verse 55 is the fourth Passover in Jesus' ministry. Jews went to Jerusalem from all of Palestine and even from other parts of the world. They went to Jerusalem prior to Passover week in order to purify themselves that they might be able to participate in the festal ceremonies. "If any were defiled in any manner by contact with the dead or by any other ceremonial uncleanness, they were required to take the prescribed measures for purification (see Leviticus 22:1-6). Different periods were necessary in order to be cleansed from ceremonial pollution. For example, one who had been polluted by the touch of a dead body, of a sepulchre, or by the bones of the dead, was sprinkled on the third and seventh days, by a clean person, with hyssop dipped in water mixed in the ashes of the red heifer. After washing his body and clothes he was then clean. These persons who went up before the Passover were doubtless those who had in some manner been ceremonially polluted" (Barnes, A. **Notes on the New Testament: Explanatory and Practical: Luke and John.** Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1965, page 305). Hyssop is an aromatic herb and medicinal plant with properties as an antiseptic, cough reliever and expectorant. The Biblical references to hyssop may refer to a number of different herbs.

John explains that it is the time for the Jewish Passover because he wrote this gospel to be read among people who were not Jews and to whom it was necessary to explain their customs.

Many people were talking about Jesus. The raising of Lazarus from the dead was of great interest. The people who came early were asking about Jesus. They were aware that it would be a risk for him to come to Jerusalem because the Sanhedrin had given strict orders that should anyone know of Jesus' whereabouts, he should report it to them. They were determined to seize Him and put an end to His work.

“They doubted whether he would come. On the one hand, it was required by law that all males should come. On the other, his coming was attended with great danger. This was the cause of their doubting. It was in this situation that our Saviour, like many of his followers, was called to act. Danger was on the one hand, and duty on the other. He chose, as all should, to do his duty, and leave the event with God. He preferred to do it, though he *knew* that death was to be the consequence; and we should not shrink, when we have reason to apprehend danger, persecution, or death, from an honest attempt to observe all the commandments of God” (Barnes, page 305).

Six days before the Passover festival Jesus went to Bethany. A supper was given in his honor at which Martha served and Lazarus was present. Mary anointed Jesus feet with an expensive perfume before drying them with her hair. She had anticipated his death by an act of inspired devotion.

A large crowd of Jews discovered that Jesus was in Bethany and came to see him and to see Lazarus as well. It is recorded that Lazarus was there. “This shows that his resurrection was no illusion – that he was *really* restored” (Barnes, page 306). The chief priests determined to kill Lazarus as well since his story was convincing many to follow Jesus.

On the day following the dinner in Bethany Jesus went to Jerusalem. He rode a young donkey which symbolized the peaceful nature of his intentions. A conquering warrior or king would have ridden a horse – a large, beautiful horse. This incident is recorded also in Matthew 21:1-16, Mark 11:1-11 and Luke 19:29-44.

The people already gathered in Jerusalem took palm branches and went out to meet him shouting:

Hosanna!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessed is the King of Israel!

The Pharisees saw the crowds of people following Jesus and felt that the ***whole world has gone after him*** (verse 19).

John 12:20-26

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 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. 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. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

There were Greeks who became Jews because they embraced the concept of only one God. They may have been “Godfearers” and were in the habit of attending the great Jewish festivals. The Greek religions had many gods and sometimes those gods fought with one another. The Greek Jews were only allowed in the Court of Gentiles in the Temple in Jerusalem. This was the outer court and it had become a place of commerce. John told of the cleansing of the Temple in John 2:13-22. Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:12-19; Luke 19:45-48 all are accounts of Jesus cleansing the Temple at the time of his attendance at the Passover prior to his death. Many commentators feel that there were two occasions when Jesus cleansed the Temple; some feel that John placed the story early in the ministry of Jesus rather than near the end.

Barnes suggests that these people could also have been “Jews who spoke the Greek language and dwelt in some of the Greek cities. It is known that Jews were scattered in Asia Minor, Greece, Macedonia, Egypt, etc. in all which places they had synagogues” (Barnes, page 308). They might also have been proselytes from the Greeks as noted above or they were still Gentiles and idolaters, who came to bring offerings to Jehovah to be deposited in the temple. Barnes feels that it is impossible to determine which of these three possibilities is the correct one, but other commentators feel they were Greeks who had embraced the Jewish religion.

This interpretation is in accord with the understanding that the Greeks symbolize in John’s Gospel the wider world. We can interpret their coming to Jesus in the context that ***God so loved the world*** (John 3:16), not just the Jews. We see this understanding in the people of Samaria when many believe after Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well. ***They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world”*** John 4:42.

It may be that the Greeks had a special interest in seeing Jesus because they were glad that he had driven the money-changers and sellers of animals from the outer court which was their place of worship. Of course, like the others who had heard the stories of Jesus’ miracles, they would have wanted to see him and learn more about him.

Perhaps they approached Philip because he was had a Greek name and a Gentile background. At any rate, Philip spoke first to Andrew and the two of them told Jesus of the Greeks’ request ***“We would like to see Jesus”***.

Whatever the Greeks might have expected from their encounter with Jesus, they probably were not prepared for what Jesus said. He told them that the hour had come for him to be glorified – “outwardly, by the homage of the Gentiles, of which these are the firstfruits. But also in the deeper sense that the cross, which is the step to the

throne of glory, is at hand” (Hunter, A.M. **The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible: The Gospel According to John**. Cambridge: University Press, 1965 page 125).

Jesus used the picture of a seed which is placed in the ground and after the cold comes and all is dead, spring will come back and the seed will produce a new plant. Death is the necessary condition of fuller life, of richer harvest. “The whole *body* or substance of the grain, except the germ, dies in the earth or is decomposed, and this decomposed substance constitutes the first nourishment of the tender germ – a nourishment wonderfully adapted to it, and fitted to nourish it until it becomes vigorous enough to derive its support entirely from the ground. In this God has shown his wisdom and goodness. No one thing could be more *evidently* fitted for another than this provision made in the grain itself for the future wants of the tender germ” (Barnes, page 309).

Jesus speaks not only of his own death and resurrection, but he speaks of the demands placed upon those who would follow him. There will be a cost; for many the cost will be their life. But the reward for those who ***hates his life in this world*** will be eternal life. The Father will honor those who serve. “This saying, richly paralleled in the earlier Gospels, starkly expresses not only the tragedy of self-love, but the glory of self-sacrifice – and its reward. Then he added: ***If anyone serves me, he must follow me; where I am, my servant will be.*** It has been said that ***follow me*** is the whole of a Christian’s duty, as to *be* is the whole of his reward” (Hunter, page 125). Note that the true source of honor is found in 12:26 “ ***My Father will honor the one who serves me.***”

No indication is given of how the Greek contingent received this message.

John 12: 27-37

“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. Father, glorify your name!”

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.

Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

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’?”

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. 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.

Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.

“Then Jesus turns to survey the way of the cross which stretches out before him. (John will not tell the story of his agony in Gethsemane. But, obviously, he knows it, and this is his equivalent.) ***Now my soul is in turmoil, and what am I to say? Father, save me from this hour. Father, glorify thy name.*** The last four words may be paraphrased: ‘Father, complete the revelation of thy holy love, even at the cost of my agony.’ It is John’s equivalent of ***“not what I will, but what thou wilt”*** (Mark 14:36)” (Hunter, pages 125-126).

A clap of thunder occurred as Jesus was speaking. “Thunder is represented in the Old Testament as the voice of God; and the same sound could be interpreted as thunder or as the voice of an angel (verse 29). To Jesus, however, it was the divine assurance that, as God had manifested his glorious power in the raising of Lazarus (11:4), so, he would do it again in the death and raising of his Son” (Hunter, page 126). Jesus said that the voice from heaven was for the people; he was in need of no reassurance.

When Jesus spoke about being lifted up it was an indication of his death on the cross. This is true when John speaks of lifted up as he does in more than one place (John 3:14 and 8:28). “But it includes also the idea of Christ’s exaltation when, as the reigning Lord, he will attract the homage of all men (Phil. 2:10)” (Hunter, page 126).

“The thought is not that Jesus will draw all *to his cross*, but that he will draw all *to himself* as the crucified and exalted Redeemer. In virtue of his dying and rising the Son of Man brings the saving sovereignty to the world, and he exercises that sovereignty by drawing all to himself in the kingdom. The term “all men” expresses the universal scope of the eschatological event “If I be lifted up”; the saving sovereignty is for *all* humankind” (Beasley-Murray, G. **Word Biblical Commentary: John**. Second Edition. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000, page 214. The Greek terms are omitted from this quote.)

The crowd asks why the Son of Man is the Messiah is to be lifted up. They understood that the Messiah would abide forever. Jesus answers by saying that the light is among them now and they should avail themselves of it.

Now the public ministry of Jesus is ended and he goes into hiding until time for the betrayal by Judas.

Verse 37 indicates that the Jewish leaders and many of the people continued in their disbelief even in the light of the many miracles which they had seen. That is a frightening reality in the light of the words which Jesus later spoke and are recorded in verse 48 ***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. 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.***

John 12: 44-50

Then Jesus cried out, “When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

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. 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.

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.

I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”

“In these words, Jesus makes the claim which is the basis and the essence of His whole life. His claim is that in Him men are confronted with God. To listen to Jesus is to listen to God; to see Jesus is to see God. That is the supreme importance of Jesus. In Him God meets man, and man meets God. Now that confrontation has two results, and both these results have in them the core of judgment as the Christian sees it.

(i) Here once again Jesus returns to a thought that is never far from us in the Fourth Gospel. Jesus did not come into the world to condemn men; He came to save men. It was not the wrath of God which sent Jesus to men; it was the love of God. And yet the fact remains that the coming of Jesus inevitably involves judgment. Why should that be? It is so because by his attitude to Jesus a man shows what he is and therefore judges himself.

(ii) Jesus said that at the last day the words which these people had heard would be their judges. That is one of the great truths of life” (Barclay, Wm. **The Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of John, Volume 2.** Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956, pages 156-157).

To hear the words of Jesus and reject them has eternal consequences. It did for the people who heard those words from Jesus Himself and it does for us today.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

The reality is that we are among those who have heard the words of Jesus. To reject them has eternal consequences. Your goal is to help each participant understand that truth and act upon it.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

The Hour Has Come

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

John 11:55-57; 12:20-37, 44-50

Background Text

John 11:55—12:50

Main Idea

Jesus offered himself to draw all people—including us—to him, challenging us to decide whether we will follow him.

Question to Explore

What does Jesus' offer of himself 2000 years ago mean for you today?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to describe the significance for their lives of Jesus' offering himself to draw all people to him.

Connect with Life:

How do you celebrate Easter? Many churches focus on Palm Sunday and the triumphal entry into Jerusalem and Easter Sunday and the celebration of the resurrection. Some traditions celebrate Maundy Thursday or Holy Thursday which commemorates the Last Supper of Jesus with His disciples. It may include the Washing of the Feet—symbolizing humility and service. Good Friday services meditate on the agony and suffering of Christ on the cross.

Have the group share meaningful celebrations related to today's study which will focus on the last days before the Crucifixion.

Guide the Study:

Have someone read John 11: 55-57.

Comment on the withdrawal of Jesus to the wilderness and on the Jewish Passover.

Ask: Why did people think that Jesus would not come to the Passover? (The chief priests and Pharisees had given orders to arrest him.)

Add: Why would Jesus come? (All Jewish males who were anywhere within reach of Jerusalem were required to come to the Passover).

Describe for the group the supper in Bethany and the actions of Mary.

Say: Mary anticipated the death of Jesus by an act of inspired devotion.

With the participants examine the story of the triumphal entry from John 12:12-19; Matthew 21:1-16; Mark 11:1-11 and Luke 19:29-44.

Ask them about the significance of Jesus riding on a donkey. (He was coming to bring peace. The conquering warrior or the worldly king would enter on a horse with a lot of soldiers accompanying him. Jesus entered with his disciples and the response of the crowd was spontaneous).

Request the group to read together the words of the crowd in John 12:13.

Have someone read John 12:20-37.

Ask: Why would Greeks be in Jerusalem at the time of Passover and why would they want to see Jesus? (They were most likely Greeks who had chosen to worship the Jewish Jehovah. They would have heard of Jesus cleansing the Court of the Gentiles which was where they could worship; they had undoubtedly heard of the other miracles of Jesus).

Inquire: Do you see a deeper meaning for the Greeks involvement? (We can interpret their coming to Jesus in the context that **God so loved the world** (John 3:16), not just the Jews.)

Ask someone to comment on what Jesus meant by the example of the kernel of wheat falling into the ground.

Ask: What is meant by **"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified"**?

Have the group briefly consider the things involved in serving and following Jesus which are described in these verses.

Seek an answer: What is the true source of honor described in 12:26?

Have someone read John 12:27-37.

Have someone describe Jesus' very human reaction to what was before him. (His heart was troubled.)

Continue by asking: Does this stop Him from doing what He came to do? (No, He states that it is for the reason He came to this time).

Ask: What noise accompanied the declaration Jesus made in verse 27?

Follow with this: For whose benefit was the voice?

Ask: What is the meaning of the phrase "**when I am lifted up**" in verse 32? (It describes His death on the cross; it also refers to the lifting up of Christ which we can do as Christians as we seek to follow Him).

Consider the further meaning of his exaltation as Lord of Lord and King of Kings.

Now ask: What is meant by the reference to light and darkness in verses 35-36? (Jesus is the light; believe in Him while you have opportunity).

Comment on the fact that even with Jesus speaking directly to them about his death and sacrifice, many of the people continued in their disbelief. In verse 48 Jesus will say that those who reject Him and do not accept His words will be condemned.

Have someone read John 12:44-50.

Say: In these words, Jesus makes the claim which is the basis and the essence of His whole life. His claim is that in Him men are confronted with God. To listen to Jesus is to listen to God; to see Jesus is to see God.

Ask: Did Jesus come to judge the world? (No, he came to save it. However, judgement comes when people reject Jesus, they judge themselves).

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Be very sensitive to the spiritual needs of your group. If there is someone who has never accepted Christ as Saviour, give the opportunity for him or her to do so.

Ask participants to express their feelings about the deeply meaningful things which Jesus has taught in this passage.

Ask a person to close the Bible study with prayer.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

YOUTH!!! TAKE TEN

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

The Hour Has Come

John 11:55-57; 12:20-37, 44-50

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

DETECTIVES: COMPARE THE STORIES

Examine the story of Mary anointing the feet of Jesus in John 12:1-8. Consider similar stories in Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:1-9; Luke 7:36-50.

List similarities and differences:

Where did the event take place in each account?

Who did the anointing?

Where is the perfume poured?

What was the value of the perfume?

Who was angered by what happened?

How did Jesus interpret the event and how does that fit with today's topic "The Hour Has Come"?

Why do differences exist in the accounts?

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***The Hour Has Come***

John 11:55-57; 12:20-37, 44-50

Beginning the Service:

Sing one or both:

How Deep the Father's Love For Us, *The Worship Hymnal* #101; CCLI #1558110**Grace Greater than Our Sin**, *The Worship Hymnal* #105; CCLI #31690 Public Domain**Offering:****Praying for the World:**

Suining, China is a city nestled in the Sichuan Basin, or "Sichuan Rice Bowl," of China's southwest. The 15 rivers that crisscross Suining make it a rich agricultural region. Farmers grow rice, cotton, and vegetables in terraced fields along the hilly landscape outside the city center. Like most cities in China, Suining is rapidly developing, but the vast majority of the area's economy is still firmly rooted in agriculture. Of the 1.6 million people, fewer than 1 percent are Christian. Pray that as the rivers etch their paths across Suining's terrain, the message of salvation may flow throughout the city, finding its way into the hearts of Suining's people.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

We Want to See Jesus

John 12: 20-21

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus."

The Message expresses it this way: ***There were some Greeks in town who had come up to worship at the Feast. They approached Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee: "Sir, we want to see Jesus. Can you help us?"***

The Greeks who had come to the Passover were called "God-fearers". They had chosen to worship Jehovah – the one God. Their backgrounds may have been that of worshipping one or several of the many Gods which the Greeks held as important.

We can get a picture of the worship of the Greek culture of the day from Paul's experience a few years later in Athens as recorded in Acts 17: 16-21.

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Aeropagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean." (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

The Greek mythology was full of stories of mighty heroes and gods. Those stories are a part of the literature from then until now. The Greeks were philosophers. Some of the great philosophers of the world were Socrates and later Plato and his student Aristotle. These thinkers influence science, ethics and religious thought to this day.

So from this rich heritage, some Greeks had apparently chosen to worship only One God – Jehovah. Yet, their worship of Jehovah was very limited – they were outsiders and allowed in the Temple only as far as the outer court which came to be known as the Court of the Gentiles.

Now the Greeks had come to Jerusalem to participate in the Passover – a time so rich in history for the Jews, but not to the Greeks.

They heard the stories which people were telling about Jesus and the miracles and they express a very natural wish – “we want to see Jesus”.

They tried to make that happen by asking a person with a Greek name and presumably Greek heritage to introduce them to Jesus. Philip did not take that upon himself but asked for the help of another disciple, Andrew.

What were the Greek god-fearers hoping to find?

They would not be interested in a god other than Jehovah. They had chosen Judaism presumably because of its focus on one God. They may have heard Jesus say that he and the Father were one. They would have wanted to know more about what he meant.

They would have been simply curious. All of Jerusalem was talking about the miracles – especially the miracle of the raising of Lazarus. The triumphal entry of Jesus found many people waving palm branches and shouting “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel!” Of course, the Greeks would have been curious to see who this one was that was called the King of Israel.

They would have wanted to find inclusion in the kingdom of God. Becoming worshippers of Jehovah did not make them Jews. They were outsiders and just how little importance they carried was exemplified by the treatment of the one place they were allowed to worship. The Court of the Gentiles had become a place of commerce – noisy and dirty.

What was the message that Jesus gave to them?

A kernel of wheat must fall into the ground and die if it is to reproduce and flourish another time.

Jesus was speaking about his death. And he spoke very clearly to the Greeks and to any who might choose to follow him.

One cannot love his life for to do so is to lose it.

One must hate his life in this world in order to keep it for eternity.

Serving means following; following means being with Jesus.

Did the Greeks understand that Jesus was calling them into his kingdom, but doing so on his terms – not on theirs?

Jesus would die and many of his followers would die. In the immediate future, following meant standing with Jesus during his trial and his crucifixion. Even those who had known Jesus for his three years of ministry did not stand with Him during those difficult

days and hours. Peter, who had proclaimed his understanding of Christ as Lord and Master, denied even knowing him and he did it three different times.

The Scripture has no word on the response of the Greeks. Was their request “We want to see Jesus” merely the curious desire of visitors to Jerusalem interested in what was happening in the city?

Was their request an honest desire to know who Jesus was and what He was teaching?

In another story involving Philip, a Ethiopian official who was another God-fearing Gentile, had gone to Jerusalem to worship and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet.

Philip was instructed by the Holy Spirit to go up to the chariot. He heard the official reading and asked if he understood what he was reading. The man admitted that he did not and could not unless someone explained it to him. He invited Philip to do just that.

The official was reading a passage in Isaiah which spoke of Jesus’ death. ***The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” Then Philip began with that very passage and told him the good news about Jesus.***

The eunuch asked Philip if he could be baptized and there, in the middle of his trip, they found water and he was baptized. ***When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.***

This man essentially said to Philip “I want to see Jesus”. His desire was real and the Holy Spirit provided Philip to tell him the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus. He believed, sealed his decision with baptism and went on his way back to Ethiopia rejoicing.

There are people today who say “I want to see Jesus”. People still do seek God just as God is always seeking and calling people. But motives are mixed even as the Greeks in Jerusalem may have had mixed motives. And Jesus frankly says to seekers today:

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. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be.

Following Jesus requires a dying to self. For many – both in the past and in today’s present world – it requires a dying to the physical self – a very real and sometimes painful and bloody death. But for all Christians, it requires a dying to the selfish needs, wants and desires which surround us in the materialistic, self-focused world in which we live.

It is daily decision-making about spending habits, use of time, placing others before self, and sharing the good news. And losing our life in this world means keeping it for eternal life.

And the promise is: **My Father will honor the one who serves me.**

Call to Commitment:

What is the dying to self that I need to do today?

Do I believe the promise that the Father will honor the one who serves Him?

Concluding the Service:

Sing:

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus, *The Worship Hymnal* #434; CCLI # 5077724 or 2151540.