



# The Corn of Wheat

## Read John 12

When Mary fell to Jesus's feet and poured ointment over His feet, Judas thought it was a horrible waste. He never understood that in losing ourselves, we gain; in giving to Christ, we are blessed; when we deny ourselves, we truly win. This is the mystery of the Christian life. It is also the mystery of Christ Himself. Christ wouldn't go any further into His suffering and death without explaining this mystery in the picture of the corn of wheat. It falls into the ground and dies so that it brings forth fruit.

### Mary's Giving Love

Besides reminding us of the raising of Lazarus (vv. 1, 9, 10), and the upcoming Passover (vv. 1, 12, 20), John 12 opens with a picture of the Savior between Mary, a believing and loving disciple, and Judas, a thief and betrayer. John paints the picture with brilliant strokes of contrast. Christ was eating with Lazarus, newly raised from the dead, while the religious rulers consult together to kill Lazarus (v. 10). As Christ already said, they have come clearly *"to steal, kill, and to destroy,"* while Christ has come to give life and that abundantly (John 10:10).

Christ defended Mary against Judas, showing her action as preparation for His burial. Mary realized that He who had taken Lazarus out of the tomb would take Lazarus's place in the tomb. But she didn't wait until the Savior's death before she anointed Him. Of all those who had followed Christ, she seems to have been the only one who truly understood the significance of Christ's death before the fact. She had truly sat at the feet of Jesus and learned the *"one thing needful"* (Luke 10:39, 42).

*"Let her alone."* The Savior defended His child against the harsh treatment of Judas. This picture of Mary, Christ, and Judas is in essence a picture of how the true people of God live in this world. They are devoted to their Lord. They give Him their all, while the world and false disciples fail to understand this true love of God's people and ridicule it.

### Christ's Lowly Reign

Christ explained what Mary was doing, and next, Scripture would explain what Christ was doing when He came riding into the city of Jerusalem on a donkey to the Hosanna cries of the people (vv. 12-14). After Christ was glorified, the disciples remembered that Scripture had prophesied in Zechariah 9:9: *"Fear not, daughter of Sion, behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt."*

Christ is the King, but not a king like many expected or wanted. He would not ride into Jerusalem in a chariot behind a military horse, indicating that His rule will be through sword and spear, military conquest, and bloodshed. He is a King, but His reign would be a reign of grace and righteousness, of service and sacrifice. In fact, even Christ's enemies were forced to admit this in verse 19: *"The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold the world is gone after him."* This is a powerful premonition that Christ's victory is sure!

Another powerful sign lies in the fact that "Greeks," or Gentiles, are asking to see Jesus. Approaching Philip, they made a simple but beautiful request: *"Sir, we would see Jesus"* (v. 21). We might wonder what glory there would be in a few strangers asking to see Jesus: it is a sign of His sure victory, yet only to faith.

## **Christ's Giving Love**

To all human appearances, Christ's reign of grace was coming to a premature and sad end. It looked like Christ was being judged and that His cause was lost. It certainly doesn't look like what He described was happening: *"Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me"* (vv. 31-32).

In other words, rather than Jesus being judged, the world and Satan were being judged. They were judging themselves unworthy of the eternal life He is bringing. They thought they were in the judgment seat over Christ, but they were really condemning themselves by rejecting Him. Yes, He would die, but there would be fruit from His death. They had no anointing for their burial and no fruit in their death, but the opposite was true of Christ. Like a corn of wheat, He would fall into the ground and die. Listen to how He said it: *"The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit"* (v. 23).

It's true, there is a deep feeling of anguish and trouble in the soul of Christ (v. 27), and yet an unrelenting willingness and gladness to do what the Father had asked Him to do. Christ revealed to us the secret of true disciples: *"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal"* (v. 25). God's people may not run away from their task, even if it means sacrifices and trouble.

Upon Christ's announcement of His fruitful death, people heard what they thought was thunder (v. 29). It was instead a voice from heaven, in answer to the prayer of Christ to the Father that He would glorify His name. *"Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again"* (v. 28). Christ explained what the voice is saying. To put it in our own words: "World, watch out. Satan, your judgment bell has tolled. Christ will be lifted up and glorified in His death. People from all nations will come to Him. Death will be a portal to true life, for here is the Resurrection and the life" (compare vv. 30-33).

## **An Invitation to the Light**

In the last section of this chapter, John joins two ideas we understand to be in conflict: God's sovereignty (vv. 37-41) and human responsibility (vv. 44-50). It is hard to understand how God blinds people's eyes so that they don't see, and thus cannot understand and be converted (v. 40). God, however, doesn't ask us to understand. He tells it to us to explain that when we do believe, it is His work. We have not made that difference ourselves; He has shined into our hearts. We need to follow God's call to walk in the light even when others refuse to, as Abraham did, and Rahab as well. God's power in their lives was great and what testimonies God made them! When others do not believe, we need to simply leave that to God, who is ruling over all.

The order of light and darkness, day and night, has a purpose in our world. When there is light, we need to make use of the light. It's as if Christ is saying: "Don't just imagine that it will always be there. Believe the light; benefit from the light, while it shines." In the life of God's children, there are periods of light and darkness. We are to drink in all the rays of the sun when we can so that when the darkness comes, our heart will still shine. God calls us to believe on the light without questioning (v. 35, 46). That's what Isaiah did way back in His day. On one occasion, He saw the Lord high and lifted up (Isa. 6:1-2). John refers to this in verse 41 of our chapter: *"He saw his glory and spake of him."* However, there was also a time when he said, *"And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him"* (Isa. 8:17). The great difference between God's children and the children of the world can be put like this: The children of the world don't look for God even in the light; God's children look for God even in the darkness.

## **Questions**

1. How are Mary and Judas pictures of different people's relationships to the Savior? What set Mary apart, even from the disciples?

2. Why did Jesus enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey?
3. "Sir, we would see Jesus" (v. 21). What does this desire express? Can you relate to it at all? Explain what it means to see Jesus by faith now and then by sight in the future.
4. How does the picture of the corn of wheat (v. 24) describe Christ's work and purpose? How does it direct us at the same time?
5. Christ knew that His death would redeem people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. He speaks of drawing people to Himself. How are people drawn to Christ (v. 32)?
6. What are some of the seasons of light that there can be in our lives (v. 36)? What does it say about the heart of the Savior that He calls to faith in the light, and then hides Himself?

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