

Sunday, March 17, 2024 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church
Bible Study
Fifth Sunday in Lent
“Whoever Serves”
John 12:20-33

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, have participants discuss, “Who is someone you have never met but are curious to meet?”

John 12:20-33 Context. This week’s reading reflects a moment in John’s account when the die has already been cast: Jesus had raised his friend Lazarus from the dead; he was becoming so popular that the religious leaders feared a riot at the upcoming Passover festival and resolved that Jesus should be killed, along with Lazarus; Judas has decided to betray him; Jesus enters Jerusalem five days before the feast as the crowd hails him as the “King of Israel.” The mention of Greeks at the festival in this week’s reading is John’s way of saying that Jesus’ mission is nearly complete, his “hour” has arrived: even Greeks (meaning here ‘Gentiles,’ probably converts to Judaism) are now coming to Jesus, and even more will come after his death and resurrection. He speaks of the self-sacrifice of his death that he is about to make, and reminds the crowds that they must be willing to make the same kind of sacrifice if they want to be his followers. Jesus speaks of being “glorified” and “lifted up.” These are terms that John the Evangelist uses to describe several things: Jesus being “raised up” on the cross; Jesus being “raised up” from the dead; and Jesus being “raised up” to heaven.

Read John 12:20-33

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the text?

Read John 12:20-33 again -

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- John 12:12–19 describes Jesus’ “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem and says the crowd went to meet him. John 12:19 says, “The Pharisees then said to one another, ‘You see, you can do nothing. Look the world has gone after him.’” The passage we are studying today opens with “Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Phillip...and said to him, ‘Sir, we wish to see Jesus’” (John 12:20-21). Why do you suppose John makes a point of telling his readers that “some Greeks” sought out Jesus?

- John doesn't tell us why "the Greeks" wanted to see Jesus or anything about their conversation with Jesus. But we can use our imagination to fill in the gaps. Why do you imagine "the Greeks" wanted to see Jesus and what might their conversation with him have been like?
- How can our church be more welcoming to those who are curious about Jesus but don't fit in with our typical demographic?
- Just after John tells his readers that some Greeks came to see Jesus, Jesus says in John 12:23, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." What does he mean by this? Do you have a footnote in your study Bible that offers some information? (A footnote in *The New Interpreter's Study Bible*, NRSV, says, "The arrival of Greeks points to the fulfillment of the eschatological promises of universal salvation and marks the beginning of a new age.")
- In John 12:26, Jesus says, "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am there will my servant be also." What does it mean for us to serve and follow Jesus today?
- In John 12:27-28, Jesus says that his soul is troubled and asks that his Father, "glorify your name." A heavenly voice responds and says, "I have glorified it and will glorify it again." What might this heavenly affirmation have meant to Jesus as he was anticipating his crucifixion? Where do you find comfort and strength during difficult times?

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, end by praying the following or a similar prayer:

O God of love, thank you for sending your son Jesus for all people. May all those who are curious find a warm welcome in our church. Help us to grow stronger in our desire to serve and follow Jesus in our community and our world today. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord's Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven
hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.