



## ST. MICHAEL'S SERMONS

Greenville, SC

Lent5 – April 2, 2006

John 12:20 – 33

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### THE HOUR HAS COME

"The Hour Has Come!" Jesus answers them. "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified!" The hour has come – not the hour of tick tock time, metered and measured with military precision by atomic clocks so that each and every hour is just exactly like the one before and the one after; not counted calculated chronological time. But rather the hour like no other hour! The right hour; the ready hour; the ripe hour; auspicious, propitious, prosperous and perfect! The right hour – to harvest the crop; to birth the baby; to buy a house; to sell your stock! The right time – to give the gift; to pop the question; to offer the ring! The right time – to ring your handbell; to plant peas or beans or collards; to swing the bat to hit the ball! Time which is a turning point for history, and for the human race . . . !

"The hour has come," says Jesus . . . . It is the right time, now, because now the world has come to see Jesus. In the verse immediately preceding this morning's Gospel text, the Pharisees lament to one another: "You can do nothing. Look! The world has gone after Him." And now, as if to prove the point, some Greeks who have come to Jerusalem for the Passover festivities find Philip – one of the disciples who has a Greek name – and say to him: "Sir! We wish to see Jesus!"

Those same words, in gender neutral form, are carved into the back of this pulpit desk: "We Would See Jesus" – to remind every preacher and every lector and assisting minister and each and every person among the People of God who call and ordain, equip and authorize, challenge and support those who stand here of *the single reason* we are all of us here in this place! WE WOULD SEE JESUS!

We all, like Philip, have Greek names, English and German and Scandinavian names, non-Hebrew names, worldly names. We live our lives in this world Jesus came to save. We know this world. And we know Jesus. And this world still comes to us to see Jesus! Not for good advice – Barnes & Noble and cable TV have cornered the market on good advice; not for loving community – although Jesus does say loving one another is the single marker for loving God; not for charity – although God is always concerned for the hungry and the homeless, and expects God's People to care for them. This world still comes to you and to me – to us – TO SEE JESUS!

We would see Jesus. And Jesus answers: "The hour has come!" The hour like no other hour! The turning time! Because, in those Greeks who have come to see Jesus, Jesus sees all time and all history; Jesus sees all people and all nations; Jesus sees your parents and grandparents and great-grandparents in the faith, and mine; Jesus sees your children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren in the faith, and mine, whom we have not seen, but whom Jesus sees! Jesus sees all those who will not see Him in person in this earthly life, but who will know Him through the flesh and blood, life and death witness of others who know Him!

Last Sunday, in the third chapter of this same Gospel of John, we heard Jesus say, "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up" as both curse and cure. This morning's Gospel text ends with Jesus' promise, "When I am lifted up I will draw all people to myself!" Now Jesus sees the time to do just that has come. The time of turning . . . . The right time. The hour. "Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified!"

The glory of the seed is that it falls into the earth and dies, and thus bears much fruit – multiplying its life. The glory of the Son of Man is that He falls into the earth and dies, and thus gives life to all people. "Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified!"

And while that hour is like no other hour, the hour still comes into the lives of individual persons at holy times. The hour came on Main Street in Biloxi, Mississippi last Fall, and we're still hearing the stories of how people there saw Jesus through people here. The hour still comes when people see the Cross in our front yard, or your car in this parking lot. It shows them Jesus! The hour still comes whenever one of you plants a seed out there in the community through your selfless service that we usually know nothing about. The hour still comes, says Hannah in the children's sermon, when you splash cold water on your face every morning or every evening, to remember your Baptism – not just to wash your face. The hour comes when young children play music – I still remember the first song I ever learned in the VCS choir. They may not ever remember the words. They may not ever play bells again, though we hope they play bells always. But the song, and the experience, puts Jesus under their skin. "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified!"

All time still turns on this hour!

Several Sundays ago, I told you of a practice we have begun in Confirmation class. After we share our highs and lows from the week just past and before we join hands and pray, I make the sign of the Cross on the forehead or the hand of the person next to me and say, "May God bless and keep you in your highs and your lows!" And each person in turn passes the blessing on around the circle. I invite you to do that now, with the person next to you. Because part of this holy hour, on which time still turns, is Jesus' gift to us that we can in fact bless one another.

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified! Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it bears no fruit. But if it dies, it bears much fruit.

"And I, when I am lifted up," says Jesus, "will draw all people to Myself!"

May God bless and keep you, in your highs and in your lows.

AMEN