

# "The Time Has Come!"

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent – Year B

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*Jeremiah 31:31-41*  
*Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 14-15*

*Hebrews 5:7-9*  
*John 12:20-33*  
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The Gospel According to John is divided into two main parts – The Book of Signs and The Book of Glory (not including the Prologue and Epilogue, both of which are brief). Between these two parts, John 12:20-30 marks the virtual halfway point in the Gospel of John.<sup>1</sup>

By this point in John's Gospel the disciples have been called, the Cana Wedding has been celebrated, and the Temple has been cleansed. The Centurion's Son has been cured and the Woman Caught in Adultery has been spared. Jesus has had conversations with both Nicodemus and the Woman at the Well, has Multiplied the Loaves and Fishes, Walked on Water, and given His discourse on the Bread of Life. The Paralytic and the Man Born Blind have both been cured and given their respective testimonies following the miracles. Finally, Lazarus has been raised and his sister Mary has anointed Jesus' feet in preparation for His burial.

As the Book of Signs wraps up and the Gospel of John flows into the Book of Glory Jesus now sets His sights on preparing for His glorification. In what appears to be a bold proclamation indicating a pivotal moment He declares repeatedly the

importance of His "hour": "*The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified*", "*...what should I say – Father save me from this hour?*" and "*it was for this that I came to this hour*". After eleven chapters of Jesus revealing Himself to His disciples, He is now preparing for His final glorification as the Son of God.

And what does this glorification entail? Jesus again gives the answer: He will be glorified in His Death; "*unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies...*"

Jesus, however, does not preach just His Death. He also begins to preach on what it truly means to follow in His footsteps and be His follower: "*Whoever loves his life looses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me...*"

Up until now in the Gospel of John the followers of Jesus, both disciples and detractors, were drawn to Jesus because of the Signs He was performing. They were directed by His forerunner John the Baptist, mystified by His changing Water to Wine, and intrigued by His analogies as Shepherd, Light and Life. They were fired up by His Cleansing of the Temple, scandalized by His Sabbath Cures, moved to shame by His treatment of the Woman Caught in Adultery and emotionally touched by His weeping at the tomb of Lazarus. He inspired the

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<sup>1</sup> Many on this 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent will be hearing the portion of John's Gospel in which Lazarus is raised from the dead (Year A). This is done in conjunction with the Scrutinies of the RCIA. However, the readings from Year B contain John 12:20-33

## "The Time Has Come"

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Woman at the Well to bring her fellow townspeople for a look-see, drew Nicodemus to a clandestine tête-à-tête, and drove away all but Twelve of His followers by His strange insinuation that His Flesh and Blood were somehow Food and Drink.

Now Jesus declares that His time has come when He will give the one great example of His Glory and what it means to be His disciple. From this point on, all of His actions and words are directed towards His Death and Resurrection, and the call of His disciples to follow in His footsteps. He will Wash His Disciples Feet, showing them that they must be dedicated to a life of self-effacing servitude (13:1-17). He will prepare them for His departure, assuring them of His purpose in leaving them (14:3-28). He will declare true Love as being true to His word (14:23) and laying down one's life for one's friends, (15:13-14) and He will command His followers to love as He has loved them (15:17). Even after His Resurrection, He will indicate "the sort of death by which Peter [is] to glorify God" (21:19) as He commissions Peter to "feed [His] sheep".

### **The Journey Through Lent**

In the Fifth Sunday of Lent we enter into the final phase of our Lenten journey, indicated by the declaration we hear in the Gospel. Next Sunday we will enter Holy Week, and eventually continue with John's account of the final stage of Christ's ministry as we hear of the Washing of the Feet on Holy Thursday and the Passion

According to John on Good Friday. As we celebrate our Sunday Eucharist this week, we enter into the last two weeks of Lent as we make final preparations for the celebration of Christ's Resurrection at Easter. Jesus declares that "the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified", and we prepare to celebrate the unfolding of that glorification in which Jesus conquered Sin and Death. Jesus will later refer back to that declaration when He acknowledges Judas as His betrayer and commands him to "be quick about what you are to do" (Jn 13:28). It is upon Judas' departure, with the wheels now set in motion, that Jesus will again raise His eyes to heaven declaring: "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him" (Jn 13:31).

Just as Lent has been for us a period of preparation for Easter, let the coming Fifth Week of Lent be a time of preparation for Holy Week when our Church enters into its highest holy days. In this week before Holy Week let us resolve to truly celebrate Jesus coming to His hour and His glorification for our salvation. Let us perhaps resolve to join our parishes in celebrating the Triduum Liturgies of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil, even though such liturgies may occur at awkward hours, be of particular lengths, and not be obligatory (as if we Catholics need imposed obligations before we engage in holy celebrations). Let us resolve to spend those three days, and the better part of Holy Week in prayer as our Lenten sacrifices and

## "The Time Has Come"

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observances come to their finale.

It is the custom of many to spend time before the Blessed Sacrament following the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper, as the Sacrament, having been removed from the Church, rests on the altar of repose. Perhaps an appropriate meditation for such time would be to read the portion of John's Gospel known as "The Last Discourse" (Jn 14-17) in which Jesus offers His final words to His Apostles before He is Crucified. These passages follow directly upon Jesus Washing of the Feet, which is heard at Holy Thursday Mass, and immediately precedes John's account of the Passion, which is read the next day on Good Friday.

In the Gospel reading Jesus declares, "The hour has come." In the final days of

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Lent let us enter into that hour, as we will hear in our Scriptures and celebrate in our worship. Let us not see Lent as just another season, or Holy Week as just another week, or Easter as just another Sunday, or as just another Easter. Let us join Christ as he enters into that "hour". Let us truly celebrate the events of Easter as true people of faith who rejoice in our salvation in Christ. Let us prepare to gather together as one people to raise our prayers to God in our highest holy days, joining Christ in our Scripture in declaring: The time has come! "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him."

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