

Global Missions in Biblical Perspective

Leading the Nations to Jesus

“Sir, We Wish to See Jesus”

John 12:20–27

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Let's start by looking at this great and glorious text of Scripture in John 12:20–30 which says [20] *Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. [21] So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” [22] Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. [23] And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. [24] Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. [25] Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. [26] If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.*

[27] *“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. [28] Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” [29] The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” [30] Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine.”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Did you know that the world will be in good shape for it's not going to tilt or spin out of control because catchers and pitchers reported last week to spring training? I can smell kangaroo leather even as I have spoken these words. Baseball has arrived. One of the biggest challenges in baseball is to learn all the signals. The third base coach has his signals. The catcher has his signals. The manager has his signals that he gives to the catcher and third base coach. Signals abound everywhere. The one signal I loved to get was the one that told me to hit away. If I could make it to first base there was one signal that I hated to get and I very seldom got. The signal was to take the next base, to steal. If you ever saw me run you would know why I hated that signal. I knew I was a moment away from utter embarrassment. That was a freebie for the catcher to throw me out at second base. The coach knew not to give me that signal unless there was an ulterior motive. When we did sprints in spring training they didn't time with a stop watch, they timed me with a calendar. So that was a signal I dreaded to get.

There is a signal in the text I just read from John 12 that the Father has given Jesus. I remember the first sermon I preached at Faith Presbyterian church in Charlotte, North Carolina. I just couldn't get up and the elder looked at me and said 'It's time.' I just remember freezing until the elder said that so I got up to do it. This is the cue, the signal that you get that in the next moment calls you to. I know Jesus gets the signal from the Father because of what He says. He says something for the first time in all of His public ministry where He has said the opposite up until now multiple times before in His public ministry. John records the opposite a number of times where Jesus has said 'My hour/time has not yet come.' That is not what He says in this text. We see in John 12:23 that Jesus answers the Greeks, 'The hour has come...' and now will the Son be glorified.

What was the signal? Why would Jesus say that? What is it that has occurred that would signal Him up to say that it is time to go to the cross, when before He told us time and time again that it's not the hour? Before give the answer this is the start of our mission's conference and it's kind of like Super Bowl week for us. This is a big deal for us. We display flags in the front of our sanctuary that represent nations of where we are sending people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our mission statement is for God's glory Briarwood is committed to equipping Christians to worship God and to reach Birmingham to reach the world for Christ. We talk about reaching the world for Christ all the time but we particularly bring focus to this at our conference where people get to meet our missionaries. I still remember growing up as a kid the impact of missions' conferences. This is a great way to get involved as a family to see what God is doing around the world through the life of our church. That is our heart's desire as a church to be engaged in this Great Commission even beyond our nation to other nations.

We also give out a prayer guide for people to be praying as we prepare for the conference and it's called leading the nations to Christ. This goes along with our theme of leading a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship as we want to lead the nations to Christ. There are so many ways for you to get involved with this so that corporately we can be about this Great Commission. This is a time we ask God how He wants us to lead us in our faith promise – what God will bring to you this year beyond your tithes that you will bring to give to world missions. It's an exciting this to get involved with and hear about. I love it when we give the amount of the faith promise at the end of the conference that includes the cents, rather than rounding it off, because it helps to remind the kids that their contribution matters. So this is the way to be engaged financially.

We also want you to be engaged personally. Maybe it's being a part of a missions committee and then thirdly we want you to be engaged prayerfully. Allow God to show you how to be praying for these missionaries – maybe it's praying by name or taking those in a particular country or nation and committing to pray for them on a regular basis. Why do we do this? It is because we have a mission from Christ to go and make disciples of *all* the nations. This isn't the only time we focus on this but it is a period of time we specifically focus on it. This is one of those times that I get assigned what I'm going to speak on where a theme has been chosen by our missions committee and they chose that if we want to lead the nations to the world which in this John 12 text the Greeks said to Philip 'We wish to see Jesus' we have to show them Jesus.

This is something that really happened in history for it's a historical narrative. When you study a historical narrative there are five elements you should ask yourself – when did it happen, where did it happen, who is it talking about when it happens, what is happening and why is it happening. So let's what through this John 12 text answering these five elements.

When did this happen? This happened in the last week of the three year public ministry of Jesus' 33 year life, after the triumphal entry and the second cleansing of the Temple, before the Last Supper and last sermon known as the Upper Room Discourse. This happening hours away from the cross. This was the cleansing where they asked Jesus 'By what authority do You do this?' Jesus answered 'This is my Father's house and it shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations.' Why did God set aside Abraham? It was to bring a seed to a family, through a nation and He said to Abraham 'All the nations of the earth shall be blessed.' So His dwelling place was a fulfillment to pray for that Messiah who would come to bring the Gospel to all the nations. That Temple is His because if it belongs to the Father then it's inherited by the Son. Its purpose is to be a house of intercessory prayer for the grace of the Lord Jesus to go to all the nations.

Where did it happen? It happened right in that Temple that had been cleansed by Jesus earlier. While He is at the Temple is when He is confronted with this personal request from the Greek through Philip and Andrew to Him.

Who are we talking about? In the text it says the Greeks. When the Bible uses the Greeks in this case, the Greeks were the last empire to sweep through prior to the Romans. Therefore a Jew would refer to anybody who is not Jew as Greek because they would come with the Greek culture and language. It was the general language of the day. Another word you could use in place of Greek here is Gentiles. The Pharisees would have used the word dogs here or a theologically nuanced term to this point would be ‘those far off.’ Those near would have been God’s covenanted nation, Israel and those far off would have been the Gentiles but they’re not going to stay far off because the whole purpose of God establishing the nation was to bring a Messiah to reach all the nations and His covenant people were going to come from every tribe and nation. So these Gentiles come up to the Temple for this worship service during the feast. This leads to the fourth question.

What is it that they do? They find Philip and Andrew and come with a very specific request. They wish to see Jesus. I’m going to do a little bit of speculation here with a couple of thoughts. Why did they come to Philip? This is my opinion. When Jesus called the first six Disciples in John 1 and 2 He called James, John, Peter, Andrew and then Philip. Then Philip went out and brought to Jesus Nathaniel. Even though Philip is Jewish he has a Greek name and he is from Bethsaida which is known as the Galilee of the Gentiles. That may be the reason he had a Greek name. Not sure if it’s because he is from this area or if it’s because he seems the guy who is always telling and bringing. I have a sense the way Philip is displayed in the Scripture that he was a communicator and he was someone who went to people for Jesus and a guy that people go through to get to Jesus. We’re not given much information here but for whatever reason the Greeks go to Philip to ask about seeing Jesus. We do know that he goes directly to Jesus and when Jesus hears from Philip and Andrew they are looking for Him Jesus answers them.

Jesus doesn’t give a specific place or time to meet them but He has this interesting response to these Greeks wanting to meet Him. Jesus says to them ‘The hour has come. Now is the Father glorified.’ Then He goes into this explanation of what He is talking about. If a seed dies, falls into the ground and is covered it bears much fruit. If it doesn’t, it bears no fruit. Jesus is saying that the hour has come for Him to go to the cross, die to save His people from all the nations of the world and now that time has come for Him to be glorified. To be glorified I have to be humbled. He has now gotten the signal that when He dies He will be glorified because in that dying He will secure a harvest. Who are those of the harvest? It is answered further in the text.

John 12:23–26 says [23] *And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. [24] Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. [25] **Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.** [26] If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.*

Here He is telling us that the life they (those of the harvest) have in the world before He saved them is the one they hate. They want to kill the old man. They want to die to themselves. That life they had that was governed by this world’s system of rebellion is hated and now their life is all about loving Me. The way we know they love Him is that they serve Him and those

who serve Him will be with Him, for where He is they will be. Later He will say that He will go away to prepare a place for them. This is not saying that if you serve Jesus you can earn your way to heaven. Jesus is saying that those who He has redeemed at the cross will turn from their life in this world to Him to love Him and the evidence will be that they serve Him and bear fruit. Then He adds one more thing. Those who are with Him, the Father will honor them and there is laid up for them an imperishable inheritance that the Father will honor them with because of what He did for them, in them, empowered them to do for Him and they will be with Him always.

It is this glorious chain of His crucifixion, our regeneration, our conversion, our new life in Christ and then our going to glory to be with Him after serving Him in this life, having said 'no' to our life in the world and 'yes' to life in Christ and serving Him. What does it mean to serve Him? It is to do that which He has called us to do because we love Him. What did He call us to do? He called us to go and make disciples all the nations. Guess what just happened here at the Temple in this text? Nations just showed up and there's the signal from the Father. It's time to die to save Your people and My people from all the nations. Then when those people get saved they take that message to all the nations to lead the nations to Christ.

Why is it that Jesus knows this is a signal from the Father? The text gives us one little hint here – the Father speaks. In the life of Jesus on this earth I have only been able to find three times that the Father speaks to Jesus. He speaks at His baptism. Matthew 3:16–17 says [16] *And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; [17] and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."*

Secondly, the Father spoke at the Mount of Transfiguration just days before this John 12 passage happened. Luke 9:34–35 says [34] *As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. [35] And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!"* And thirdly, here in John 12:28b which says [28b] *Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."* The Father is being glorified in His Son. This is the hour that calls Him to the cross for the Father has sent the signal. The people didn't actually hear the words but they heard thunder. In other words, He was getting their attention but Jesus already knows and has gotten the signal. He did this for your sake but what was it that had given Jesus that?

I want to suggest three evidences in the life of these Greeks (Gentiles) that give this to us. One is their desire to worship God (John 12:20). This is an evidence that God is in someone's life. If I walk through a field and see a turtle on top of a fence post I know I'm not the first one to walk through this field. When I see people wanting to worship God with all their soul, not wanting to worship the act of worship or for what they want in worship, I know God has been working, because none of us want to worship God for God's glory unless He works in our heart. We all love worship for you can see it any football game, baseball game or concert. You are going to worship so the question is who, why and how are you going to worship? Those who want to worship God in spirit and truth only do so because God has been working in their life. If He doesn't then the last thing they want to do is worship God and the first thing they want to do is worship themselves.

I want to substantiate this for you from the book of Romans. Romans 1:18–20 says [18] *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. [19] For what can be known about God*

is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. [20] For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

In other words, no one has an information problem for God has given all the information of who He is that you need to worship Him for creation shouts the glory of God. His handy work and fingerprints are all over the creation. But what do we do? In our sinful response the revealed truth in creation in our unrighteousness. The heart of the problem is not the problem with the mind. The heart of the problem is the problem with the heart. How does it show up? It shows up through our ungodliness and unrighteousness. How does ungodliness and unrighteousness suppressing the truth show up? Look at the next few verses.

Romans 1:21–23 says [21] *For although they knew God, they did not honor (worship) him as God or give thanks (worship) to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. [22] Claiming to be wise, they became fools, [23] and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.* So what happens when men say they're going to worship? They worship themselves through idolatry instead of God. Suppressing the truth in righteousness always shows up in anarchy and the first place and the most depraved place of anarchy will be sexual anarchy. Let's go further.

Romans 1:24–25 says [24] *Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, [25] because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.* In other words, there is a chain that is here.

The sexual anarchy (sexual promiscuity, sexual pornography, sexual perversion) that surrounds and engulfs you today is there because men and women will not worship God. When you don't worship God it always leads to the chaos and rebellion expressed in the self-gratification of sexual anarchy. That is where we're born. We are born God-deniers and self-worshippers. So when you see these Greeks (Gentiles) coming to worship God, the signals been given and God is doing something – to the nations, the hour has come.

Secondly, they have a desire for Christ. They specifically want to see Jesus. We wish to see Jesus. No one wants to come to see Jesus unless God does something in their heart first. I want to show you this from another chapter in Romans where Paul is telling us about the natural man apart from the grace of God. He describes it from a series of Old Testament verses, mostly from the Psalms. Romans 3:10–18 says [10] *as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; [11] no one understands; **no one seeks for God.** [12] All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." [13] "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." [14] "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." [15] "Their feet are swift to shed blood; [16] in their paths are ruin and misery, [17] and the way of peace they have not known." [18] "There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

If no one seeks for God and you meet someone who seeks for God (worships God) then what does that tell you? It tells you that God changed their heart. God changed their seeker and their want. God is changing their mind and their heart for He is doing something in them. Jesus has gotten the signal. When they come wanting to see Jesus they are not coming of their own initiative for God is doing a work in them and Jesus knows God is working. He gets the signal.

Thirdly, they desire for help to find Christ through their humility and joy to see Jesus. When the Greeks tell Philip they want to see Jesus underneath that is ‘will you help us?’ Philip is ready for he has lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. He gets Andrew in on this. They are going to draw them in. If you are reading this today and you don’t know Christ as Lord and Savior you can leave this today saved – dying to yourself, living unto Christ, headed for heaven and the joy of serving Him on the way. God has allowed me to help you, to tell you He loves you and died on the cross for you. You need Him and you can join the rest of us who are saved sinners by God’s grace, headed to glory and we get a chance to help bring others along the way.

Romans 10:13–15 says [13] *For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” [14] How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? [15] And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”*

So as you leave this today you get to go be a preacher. People get to hear Jesus through you, then believe on Him and the call upon Him. There are whole nations that need to hear Him and perhaps we can’t go there but God has called some people to go there and we can go with them by praying for them, supporting them and sending them. *And how are they to preach unless they are sent?*

Look at what Philip is doing here. The hour has come for you and me. Will we lead these people, whom God is raising up to be saved, to Jesus? The hour has come for us to be Philip. Here is another incident in the Bible about another Philip from Acts 8.

Acts 8:26–35 says [26] *Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place. [27] And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship [28] and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. [29] And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” [30] So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” [31] And he said, “**How can I, unless someone guides me?**” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. [32] Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth.*

[33] *In his humiliation justice was denied him.*

*Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth.”*

[34] *And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” [35] Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.*

We can’t get to all the nations but there are people called and gifted that can go and we can send them. When they go I go because I’m praying for them and financially supporting them. It’s all being put together for God’s glory but people need the help and we get to lead them from the nations to Jesus.

I look forward to the amount of our faith promise giving but even more than that I look forward to seeing how many of us get engaged in prayer and financial support. I’m not looking at how much. Here’s how I started. In 1972 I was convicted that I wasn’t tithing because I was

down to a part time job making \$75 a week. My wife and I started tithing at \$7.50 a week in October of 1972 and I felt led to add .25 cents to that a week for faith promise, mission giving. At that time being enrolled in a private college, with a wife and a kid that .25 cents was a big deal for me. I'm not going to tell you what we give today because it wouldn't be right but I'm glad for the day I started at .25 cents. I am glad to get started so pray about how much the Lord would have you give. Do it with your wife and kids and watch your kids come up with the .18 cents. Watch what happens and then get in on it – sending to the nations.

The time had come for Jesus to save them and He secured a harvest. Now the Lord of the Harvest is calling us to send. You pray and when He gives you the amount you say 'God I'm sending it in and it's going to go to leading the nations for Christ.' Make sure you have a prayer program schedule this year to be praying for these missionaries. You are either a missionary or a mission field. If you don't know Christ as your Savior and Lord you are a mission field but if you have been saved then you are ready to be a missionary. Jesus said 'The Father sent Me and so send I you' (John 20:21) so you are to go to the nation you live in, but perhaps you can't go to other nations physically but you can pray for them and support them financially.

God may be calling some of you to our Global missions committee to help oversee all of this. I love how this committee makes sure that everyone we're sending is doing evangelism, discipling, church planting, church revitalization and leadership development. Because of this I know what is being done with the money of God's people. God maybe calling you to be a cross cultural missionary. Perhaps in this coming week of the conference God may unfold that for you. Let's spend some time praying right now.

Prayer:

Father, thank You so much for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the great privilege to look in anticipation for this missions' conference. God prepare our hearts for this. If you are reading this today and you think you are a mission field but you want to lose your life and have a new life in Christ. Then trust Him for salvation for He died on the cross at the right time at the right hour for you then come to Him. If you would like for someone to pray with you please call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we would love to pray with you personally and confidentially. Join the harvest and then join afterwards the harvest workers. Lord of the Harvest bring forth the workers. Owner of the Harvest, Jesus, bring forth the harvest. As we pray and hear through this week help us to be engaged, equipped as Christians to reach the world for Christ, I ask in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

AN OVERVIEW

- I. When?
- II. Where?
- III. Who?
- IV. What?
- V. Why?

A CLOSER VIEW

Three Evidences the Hour Had Come

- I. A Desire to Worship God

II. A Desire for Christ

III. A Desire for Help to find Christ

LIFE TAKEAWAY

The hour has come... the time is now... the need is great for us to personally engage another dynamic in the multi-faceted Great Commission call to a Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship... Let's L.E.A.D. that men and women from all the nations will "see Jesus."