

The tension continues to build, beginning early in the Gospel of John to now in chapter 12

Lazarus raised from the dead and the crowds followed Jesus

The Pharisees and Chief Priests plot to kill Jesus

Mary anoints Jesus at a meal given in his honor following Lazarus' resurrection

The plot to kill Jesus, now includes Lazarus

Jesus enters Jerusalem on the back of a donkey—coming as their Messiah

The crowds celebrate him as their King—albeit, they assume an earthly King

It is a very public moment with the crowd full of energy, while Pharisees deepen their plots

Among the crowd were some Greeks who wanted to talk to Jesus and asked Philip to introduce them

Philip and Andrew told Jesus what they wanted

But John's record of what happened next is surprising

This doesn't seem to be a conversation with the Greeks and they aren't mentioned again

Instead, it appears that Jesus says several provocative statements to the people around him

Amid the excitement and heightened emotions of people welcoming their King

Pharisees that are plotting his demise

Curious onlookers are in the crowd and that includes Greeks

In the past, in times like these, Jesus has slipped through the crowds and disappeared

This time, it is as if he has an agenda to speak certain things, and not only to the Greeks

John 12:23-26 NRSV

*Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor."*

Jesus recognizes that his time has come—his death is imminent, and he chose to say something first

Using the familiar concept of planting a seed—for a grain of wheat to multiply and grow

It must be planted in the earth, where it changes and germinates into a plant

Given the right conditions, it will undergo this process of change and grow into a plant

Ultimately producing lots more wheat—early Quakers talked a lot about the Seed

Jesus calls us to do the same—to be willing to change and to give up life as we have known it

To put ourselves in the place of growth—like a seed in dirt—be where growth can happen

Jesus calls us to be willing to give up our false security and follow him wholeheartedly

It means jumping in with both feet and doing things God's way—trusting God

Giving up what I was for what I become—letting go of the past so that I can find my way

Trusting means leaving the outcome to God—knowing that I only need be faithful

The fruit is God's miracle, as we are faithful to follow, the outcome is God's doing

It doesn't mean to "hate" or deny one's self in the way that some have taken that to mean

Elsewhere Jesus says to love your neighbor as yourself

He is simply saying to put Jesus first and follow wholeheartedly after Jesus and his ways

Allowing ourselves to be transformed and to become a lifelong follower of Jesus

To put our commitment to following Jesus above our own security needs

To be willing to trust Jesus with outcomes and follow even in the face of death

In the midst of this teaching, Jesus realizes the immensity of what is happening and says to himself...

*"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name."*

*Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."*

The crowd thought it was thunder, or maybe an angel—but Jesus said,

*"This voice has come for your sake, not for mine,"* and continued his teaching...

Jesus alludes to his pending death, when he says that the ruler of the world will be driven out

And that he will be lifted up from the earth and draw all people to himself

Reading on ahead and knowing what's next—as did our author, the apostle John

In Jesus' death and resurrection, he conquers death and sin

Evil no long has the ultimate power over us—holding us in its grip

In defying death and returning to live in eternity—Jesus broke the power of death

Not understanding, the people ask what he's talking about—

We know that the Messiah lives forever

But they didn't understand that the Messiah is not simply an earthly King

Jesus, the Messiah will live forever... just not as a human King on earth

What do you mean that you will be lifted up? Who are you?

Again, Jesus doesn't answer their questions directly

Jesus tells them that they have the Light with them awhile longer

So while they can walk in this direct light—they should do so

Earlier in John, Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world"

Again, referring to his death, Jesus says this Light won't be with them in the same way

But Jesus said that if you believe in this Light—you become children of Light

As we see and become aware of the Light—we can choose to follow and live within the Light

That's all it takes to become children of Light—stepping into the Light, minding the Light

Early Quakers took this up as one of their hallmarks—being children of Light

Then our author—the apostle John—summarizes Jesus teaching...

You believe in Jesus—you also believe in God who sent Jesus to earth

They are the same—Jesus does nothing without God and the fullness of God is in Jesus

You see one... you see the other

Again, Jesus says he has come as Light and that we have plenty of Light to guide us

We no longer need to live trapped by evil as the Light shines and shows us the way

Evil closes in, yes, but the Light is stronger and shines in the places evil tries to hide

Stay in the Light

Jesus said he does not judge anyone who hears his words, but doesn't follow them

Because he didn't come to judge the world but to save the world—giving us life

This is again one of those places we have put the emphasis in the wrong place

We have made it all about judging and removing those who do wrong

But that is not what Jesus said!

Ultimately, the judging is of our own choosing when we choose to go our own way

Finally, this is the message that God, the Father, gave to Jesus to speak

This ends Jesus' public ministry to the people—from now on his teaching is to his followers