

Sermon: The Life of the World

Text: John 12:20-36

Discussion Questions:

The principle of **multiplication** is truly mind blowing.

Take, for example, folding a simple piece of 0.1mm thick paper. I just tried it with a piece of 8.5x11 computer paper, and was able to fold it six times—making it about a half-inch thick. No big deal, right?! Well, if my piece of paper were large enough, and I could fold it 42 times—how thick do you think it would be?

~ According to mathematical calculations, the thickness would extend 28,000 miles past
THE MOON!

Or think about planting 25,000 kernels of corn in a one-acre field. If each kernel germinated into a stalk (the average is closer to 75% germination), and each stalk produced between one and two ears (which is the average), and each ear contained 600 kernels (which is the average)—how many kernels of corn would be produced in that one-acre field?

~ According to my simple calculations, the yield would be 21 MILLION kernels of corn.

With this in mind, read **Matthew 13:18-23**.

~ In the first three soil types (hard soil; rocky soil; thorny soil), how much does the seed multiply? Why or why not?

~ What happens when the seed falls on good soil? Discuss the importance of a person both HEARING and UNDERSTANDING. Talk about the effect of multiplication.

Examination:

- Read **John 12:20-26**
 - It would be easy to miss the significance of verse 20. This is the first mention in John's Gospel of people, other than Jews, who are seeking out Jesus. How much effort would it have required for someone from Greece to be in attendance for the Passover in Jerusalem (have someone get directions on their cell phone from Athens to Jerusalem...it's nearly 1000 miles by sea and nearly 2000 miles by land).
 - How significant is it that verse 20 immediately follows verse 19? Make an argument for this being a "turning point" in John's Gospel. Is John prefiguring the great future-coming of the Gentile world to Jesus?
 - It's clear that these Greeks weren't tourists. Why were they in Jerusalem—and attending the Passover Festival? What does this say about their hearts?
 - Why do you suppose these Greeks would have an interest in meeting Jesus (v. 21)? How big of an "ask" would this have been?
 - I (Pastor Jody) once saw the phrase from verse 21 inscribed on a small plaque in a pulpit—facing the preacher: *"Sir, we would very much like to see Jesus"*. Why is this a good reminder for preachers? And for that matter—for ALL of us?
 - Why do you suppose these Greek (Gentile) God-fearers would have sought out Philip with their request (v. 21)? Why does John point out that Philip is from Bethsaida in Galilee (for a clue to this answer—see Isaiah 9:1 and Matthew 4:15)?

- Verses 23 – 36 contain the next-to-last sermon Jesus delivers here in the Gospel of John (the final sermon is later in the chapter—verses 44-50). Jesus doesn't grant a private audience with these Greek seekers. But this sermon seems to be His response to them. With that in mind—it can be viewed in some respects as Jesus' message to the Gentiles...or to the World. What are some themes or phrases in this sermon that might indicate this?
 - What did Jesus mean when He said "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (v. 23)? What do you think His hearers thought He meant?
 - Discuss verse 24 through the lens of the principle of multiplication.
 - Why is Jesus emphasizing the importance of "dying" in the process of germination?
 - How is it that a person who loves their life in this world will lose it (v. 25)? Conversely, how is it that a person who hates their life IN THIS WORLD will keep it?
 - What do you think it means to be honored by the Father (v. 26)?
 - The idea of "keeping our life for eternal life" (v. 25) seems to be connected with "being honored" by the Father. How much of this has implications for the present—and how much has implications for the future? How might it change the way we live—if followers of Jesus truly did think about and value the "greater reward" that comes on the other side of death?
- Read **John 12:27-36**
 - Why did Jesus come to this earth (vv. 27-28)?
 - What do you make of these occasions when God the Father speaks (thunders!) from heaven—in much the same way we would think of a voice booming out over a loud speaker system in the sky? Why do you think God the Father does this (v. 30)?
 - Wow—the implications of verse 31 are beyond astounding. This is clearly a reference to the impact Jesus' death (glorification) on the cross will have on Satan himself. What do you think it means that Satan will be "driven out"?
 - How does the inclusion of "all people" (v. 32) fit with what Jesus is saying throughout this entire sermon (perhaps with the Greek question-askers in mind)?
 - What does the crowd's response in verse 34 tell us about their expectations regarding a Messiah? Is it any wonder that any talk on the part of Jesus with respect to His death would be completely incompatible with their expectations?
 - Summarize what Jesus is saying in verses 35-36. What do you think He meant by saying "walk while you have the light"? How will the darkness overtake them?
 - Discuss verse 36 "in light" of 1 Thessalonians 5:5 and Ephesians 5:8.
 - How does someone become a "child of the light"? How does this connect with John's overarching purpose in writing the entire Gospel of John (20:30-31)?
 - This is the last time that Jesus "hides Himself" from the crowds (v. 36). What do you think was going through Jesus' mind this last and final time alone before entering Jerusalem for the Passover—and ultimately going to the cross?

Application:

If you were given the opportunity to have a private audience with Jesus (much like the request by these Greeks that prompted this sermon in verse 21)—what would you ask Him or say to Him?