**Jesus and the Greeks**

**The Word**

Read together John 12:20-28

**The Big Idea**

Jesus models a new kingdom of one new humanity where the old dividing lines are broken down and where death is no longer the great enemy to be feared but is a component of the resurrection life he brings to the world.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. On Sunday we talked about how the upside-down kingdom actually turns the world right-side up, and several examples were mentioned (the wisdom of God is foolishness of man, the first will become last, bless when persecuted, greatest among us is servant of all, we gain our life by losing it, etc.). In your mind, what is the most important way the church can live out the upside-down kingdom in our world today?

2. On Sunday we talked about unnecessary dividing lines that might keep a person from coming to Jesus (racial, political, etc.). What are some any unnecessary dividing lines we create in the church today that are rooted in human traditions or principles rather than the Word of God? How have you seen that play out in your own experience?

3. On Sunday it was suggested that rather than asking people to clean themselves up and fit within our categories, we should be like Philip and Andrew in our passage: Just bring them to Jesus and let him sort them out. How would you respond to that idea? What questions or issues does that raise for you?

4. On Sunday we discussed the death and resurrection that is at the heart of the Christian faith. How would you respond if a non-Christian asked you the question: “How does your belief in the resurrection of Jesus change how you go about an average day of your life?” And how does your actual life live up to the response you’d give?

**Digging Deeper**

Recently we walked through Mark 8:34-38. Compare Jesus’ words in that passage to today’s passage in John 12:23-26. What similarities do you see, and what differences do you see?

**Sermon Outline**

I. Introduction: The Upside Down Kingdom

A. We talk about the “upside down kingdom,” but actually the gospel turns the world right-side up.

The wisdom of God is foolishness of man, the first will become last, counting things rubbish for Christ, bless when persecuted, greatest among us is servant of all, we gain our life by losing it

B. We so often take our cues from the world, but as Christians we simply can’t do that.

Are we living out the upside-down kingdom in the midst of our cultural moment?

C. We are called to “followership” of Jesus and his ways. Jesus himself saw his life as scripted by his Father.

D. Upside-down glasses: if you wear them for two weeks, your brain will flip it right side up. That’s how Scripture works.

II. One humanity: let’s love like it (v. 20-22)

A. Dividing lines to erase

1. It’s the coming of the Greeks to Jesus which signals that Jesus’ hour has come. The hour of his sacrifice is precisely what brings about the New Covenant which is made available to the Greeks.

2. Jew and Greek–race and ethnicity problems have been with us a long time

a. It actually made people wonder if they could come to Jesus, it made the disciples wonder if they could bring a person to Jesus.

b. This issue continues on through Acts…Acts 6 (distinguishing Hellenistic Jews from Hebrew Jews), Acts 11:20; can a Greek come to Jesus or do they have to convert to Judaism (see Acts 15)--this was a long term big issue. Can they really come to Christ, do they have to undergo some pre-Christian conversion, do they have to have a second post-Christian conversion?

3. What makes us wonder if a person can come to Jesus today?

Example 1: A friend, who was a new convert who wondered if she could still be a Democrat and come to Jesus, or if she’d have to convert to Republicanism

Example 2: Intersectionality. “If you’re not in my exact category of race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. you can’t understand me, and I can’t understand you.”

4. Let's be like Andrew and Phillip–Just bring them to Jesus and let him sort them out.

B. Dividing lines to keep

1. Does this mean we throw out all lines–No! Exactly because of what follows (crucifixion for our sins) we realize we need to redraw our lines.It seems the Jewish culture was drawing the dividing line between good and evil between groups of people (Jews and Gentiles or even Hebrew Jews and Hellenistic Jews). Jesus is saying we ALL have things that need to be atoned for.

2. The dividing line between good and evil is drawn through the middle of every human heart. We need to have a very keen sense of good and evil, but the first place we apply this is to our own heart.

a. Biblically, this is the same as moving the from line of the Pharisees “Lord, thank-you for not making me like this tax-collector/sinner” to the line of the Last Supper disciples, who, upon hearing that someone would betray Jesus immediately started to ask, “Is it me?”

b. Walking with Jesus for 3 years had made them have a very high view of divine holiness, and a very suspicious view of their own motives.

3. Jesus was accepting of all people but he wasn’t accepting of all their practices. The free grace of Jesus leads to the transformation of every part of our lives. We come to Jesus to be altered.

III. “Death-n-resurrection” worldview–let’s live like it (v. 23-28)

A. Intro

1. We need to join in Jesus’ view–always seeing death and resurrection together. Paul does this a lot when he talks about his own death or others who have passed away (I die, but then I’m with Jesus which is far better; those who are asleep in death  are caught up together and be with the LORD always)

2. Pagan world sees death as a terminal event; Christian world sees death as a coin–tails is death, heads is resurrection. When you die, you don’t really die, you just get your coin–heads and tails together.

3. Similarly with second coming–it is actually wrapped up in this same crucifixion event (in 1 Cor 15–2nd coming and resurrection are intimately tied together). 2nd coming is not personal but worldview. It is not Jesus is coming again rescue me from my personal problems, but Jesus is coming again to complete the story in which death is NOT the end, and the fall is not the story. Creation, fall, redemption, consummation!!

3. This can decrease panic and increase hope when it comes to death, and this makes loving easier because God will sort out all things in the end.

B. So we are to be death and resurrection people

1. Money: Don’t store up a bunch of wealth here. Give it away to experience true life and lay up treasures in eternity.

2. Homeland: Our true citizenship isn’t here, it’s in heaven. We are exiles now and will come home to Jesus for eternity.

3. Politics: We engage politics as ambassadors. We aren’t of the tribe of the elephant or the donkey. We are of the tribe of the lamb. And that informs how we engage in the politics of our day. We care deeply but we also have a healthy detachment and put our politics in perspective.

IV. Conclusion

As I consider the upside down nature of the kingdom, what in my own life needs to be turned right-side up?

“Death-n-resurrection”power

1. The strange, inverted world of gospel power.

a. Weak become strong, wise become fools, the first become last,

b. We return blessing for cursing, we love our enemies and do good to those who persecute us

2. Demanding a world oriented to you and your team/tribe victory vs contributing to a world oriented toward God’s glory.

3. Not grasping for temporal victory–analogous to money–not storing up our treasure here on earth, not storing up our political or national treasure here on earth. We are first Christians and secondly citizens of our country,

C. “Death-n-resurrection” glory

1. God’s glory not our glory; God’s story, not our story

2. The means to glory are often not very glorious–for Jesus in this passage, it immediately leads to crucifixion

D. “Death-n-resurrection” following

1. We often don’t really know what to do when confronted with the big problems of the world–be it racial issues at home, or a Ukrainian war abroad, or divisions in our politics, or divisions in our church

2. Promise of this passage is not victory in our campaigns but  companionship (Jesus will be with us) and honor (Jesus will honor us) in all our service.

3. It does not matter what befalls–it is not that you won’t suffer as you follow Jesus, it is that you won’t suffer alone. It is not shed tears, but that Jesus will shed tears with you, and in time he will wipe every tear, and he will actually preserve and redeem them [Psalm 56:8 says, “You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book”]

4. We don’t have to figure out the world–we are followers. We don’t so much solve the world’s problems as simply do that next good thing that we see to do. We follow his way.