



Grain

“My Christian faith tells me that [the] Good News is only good if it is for everyone, otherwise it's just ideology.” —

Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber

Field – John 12: 20-33

²⁰Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” ²²Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Very 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. ²⁵Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor. John 12:20-26

Thoughts by Kyle Minden

I initially found it odd that the writers of John felt it necessary to mention the presence of “Greeks” in the first verse of our text. Here these authors were, recounting and putting into writing what would be Jesus’s last public message, and they had to start by going out of their way to document the presence of “Greeks.” There is a considerable debate about who the “Greeks” were, but nearly all theologians and scholars can agree that they were some sort of outsiders. They were not viewed particularly favorably by the religious elite. And yet these “Greeks” wanted to see Jesus.

It becomes more apparent on why they were included in the text when we hear Jesus speak. Jesus says that “whoever serves me, the Father will honor.” Likewise, when Jesus is foretelling his departure from the earth, he says that “when I am lifted up from the earth, [I] will draw all people to myself.” Jesus is telling us that all will be drawn into him and lifted up from the earth. Service to Jesus seems to be the only prerequisite to be honored and included with the Father. The doors to the kingdom are open to all, including the outsiders among the crowd.

I think the authors made sure to document the presence of these outsiders to drive home the point that Jesus opens the doors for all people to follow him. During his last pastoral message on earth, Jesus is emphasizing that he is for all people. No one’s race, background, culture, or place of origin can separate Christ followers from being lifted up with Jesus from the earth. There are no walls that separate people from being held by Jesus.

Who are the cultural or historical “outsiders” that are looking for Jesus, and are we giving them a home in our communities? Like Jesus, are we drawing all people into the loving embrace and community of the church? Are we also lifting up anyone who walks through the door?

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May God bless you this week,

Kyle Minden

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