

*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.*

*27"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. 28Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." 29The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." 30Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. 31Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. 32And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." 33He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. 34The crowd answered him, "We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" 35Jesus said to them, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. 36While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light." After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them.*

Any day now, farmers will be burying seeds - millions of seeds - billions of seeds. And they will wait.

Below in the ground a seed will swell with moisture. If the temperature is right – if birds or bugs do not consume it – if there is life in the seed a spout will begin. The sprout will feed on the seed, consume the seed as a new plant is growing. In ten days or fifteen a shoot will break through the crust of the earth – only the beginning of what will be.

Jesus said you are like a seed. He said it in this way:

*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.*

I remember my father teaching me about germination – sprouting. At what we called the seedhouse – the building that housed the Schlessman Seed Company – there was a unit that was like a mini refrigerator. This unit created the conditions that a seed would encounter when it was planted. I remember my father taking a tray from that unit lifting what looked like a damp paper towel, and counting the seeds that were spread out upon the tray.

Each batch of corn was tested for germination in this unit so that on the tag on the bag of seed a number could be printed telling how many of the seeds were likely to grow into plants. 93% test germination the tag might say.

The farmer could expect 93 out of 100 of the seeds he would plant from that bag to begin growth.

But the day my father explained all of this to me he was testing old seed - seed that was a year old. In the year's time some of the seeds lost the life in them. So now the number that would be on the tag might be 85% or 78%. With each passing year fewer and fewer seeds had life in them.

*Those who love their life lose it, but those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*

You are like a seed you must be planted if you are to bear fruit. Now with Jesus it is clear what this planting means. He was planted in the earth – in the tomb through this crucifixion and on the third day he burst forth a new life in the resurrection. But what does it mean for you to be planted – to lose your life?

Put your arms around yourself – pull in to yourself. Focus all your attention on you. Spend your whole life on you – on taking care of you – thinking about you – protecting you – not using up you – entertaining you. You are like a seed that just stays a seed. All around you may be others whose lives are consumed in service – whose time is not their own – who lose hold of themselves in opening their arms and their lives to others. Where you are rested and well-fed and secure these others have their days interrupted with people asking something of them. While your bank account grows they may have none at all as neighbors' needs come first. While you sleep peacefully they may awaken in the night over concern for a dying mother and all the help her children will need - or concern for a teenager whose life at home is full of shouting and anger - or thinking how to help that man whose wife is slowing being consumed by Alzheimer's disease. And when morning comes you may be free for trips to the mall and time for TV while others struggle to give even more of themselves as they grow in love.

What does it mean to lose life? To let go of me and to give my life to others.

Jesus did. *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.* Jesus let go of himself, opened his arms for embracing you. God raised him out of death into life.

Think of the fruit that resulted. Think of the love and the faith and the sacrifices that grown from that one planting of Jesus in death. He opened his arms and God place in those arms the whole world.

You are not Jesus. He is the one who saves the world – not you. Still he invites you to join him in his work of bringing glory to God’s name. Take time to get to know a child this morning – give that child another person who says, “hello” – “how are you doing today” – “tell me about what happened to you this week” and then listen to that teenager with all the love you would pour out on your own child or grandchild. That teenager will know more about God in your caring – God will be glorified.

Take the money that you have piled up for your security and invest some dollars now in seeing that there is a place for teenagers to gather and talk – a place where drugs and alcohol are not the glue that holds community together.

Take money you have and invest that money in supplying people to council young girls who are pregnant – or to support Westhaven – a shelter for runaway teens.

Jesus said, *“Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am there will my servant be also.”*

The grain that sits in the bag – the seed that is not planted loses life as the years pass. But the grain that is planted in the earth – that is no more - comes back in the harvest not one grain but hundreds. Jesus wants you to follow him in this – to be planted as he was planted.

May God grant this.