

Living the Sacrificial Life #1

Being a Grain of Wheat

John 12:1-25 (24) - "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."

Background

Jesus is in his final week on earth. As he prepares for the ultimate sacrifice, there are others that are preparing for a very different level of activity. They have been watching him for 3 years, hearing all of his teaching, but they have been interpreting the teaching through the filter of their own need, as do we. That filter makes us focus on the internal benefit to the teaching – how the teaching benefits us. Jesus, however is trying to get those followers to see more than just their own benefit, but to follow his example to think outside of themselves.

Comparisons:

Scripture Reference	Self Focus	Others Focus
John 12: 1-5	Judas – Saw the opportunity for more money for him. Viewed Mary's action as wasteful	Mary - cared more for Jesus than for her priceless ointment. She wanted to give him the best. She gained more from giving than from receiving
John 12: 9-11	Crowd – While the banquet was meant to honor Jesus, the crowd was more interested in feeding their curiosity upon seeing Lazarus Chief Priests – Rather than rejoice with Lazarus and his resurrection, they were willing to kill him to keep Jesus from gaining any more disciples	Jesus – Could have been focused on his own inner turmoil, but saw Mary's actions as beneficial to her and to his destiny
John 12: 12-19	Pharisees – Were only interested in their own success, rather than seeing another teacher succeeding with the crowd	Praising Crowd – They saw something in Jesus and gave themselves to honoring him (strangely enough, the crowd did so because they saw something for themselves)
John 12: 20-25	Greeks – They were interested in the experience of being with Jesus more than in following Him (notice, they wanted to "see" Jesus)	Jesus – was focused on what his sacrifice would mean for others, not for him. "Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains alone"

Contrasting Statements

Jesus makes two distinct statements in his response to the Greeks' request that seem at odds with each other:

- "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (vs 23)
- "Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed" (vs 24)

Glorified in the Greek (δοξάζω) means, among other things, *to make renowned, to render illustrious. In other words, Jesus is saying, "Now you will know what I am really all about."* People had been asking Jesus to reveal His true self and purpose, and now he was about to do it. Off come the masks, the people had just declared him the one who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel. Jesus was about to announce his candidacy... or so they thought

Jesus' true purpose was not to raise Himself up as a king and take over, but to fall down as a seed and die

If we want to be like Jesus, we have to be like Him in purpose:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness (Philippians 2:5-6)

For Jesus, glory and self sacrifice went together

Purpose for the Seed

- "A seed is a **baby plant waiting dormant** for the right mixture of nutrients to sprout and grow into a new plant"
- The seed is a "vessel" which contains, protects and aids in **distribution of the embryo (zygote) of the plant to a new destination**
- A seed is a **small embryonic plant** enclosed in a covering called the seed coat
- any propagative part of a plant, including tubers, bulbs, etc., **especially as preserved for growing a new crop**

Seeds exist primarily to reproduce other seeds. Therefore the only way the seed can be successful in being who they are supposed to be is to **fulfill their primary object to reproduce**. *The only way for the seed to do this is to die to its current state, and trust that the secondary state will do what it does naturally*

How Hard is it?

"Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die..." (Romans 5:7)

We are currently in the Lenten season where people all around the world are "giving up" everything from chocolate and coffee to bubble gum and swearing for 40 days. The day before Lent begins, people participate in **Fat Tuesday** (Mardi Gras), basically a celebration of all the things that people will be giving up for the 40 days. During the Lenten fast, for many, it is about how long they can last, and comparing what they gave up to what another person gave up. In summary, it is still about the seed **continuing to exist as is**.

Why have we fasted they say, and You have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves and you have not noticed? Yet on the day of your fast you do as you please and exploit all your workers. Your fasting ends with quarrelling and strife and in striking each other with wicked fists... (Isaiah 58:3-4a)

For Israel, nothing changed when they fasted. They were the same people as before the fast, and their only concern was getting God to recognize them (*the equivalent of a child holding their breath to turn blue*).

Sacrifice is not meant to leave the one sacrificing the same, but with just less of what they had. Sacrifice changes the person sacrificing into something that can produce more than it ever was

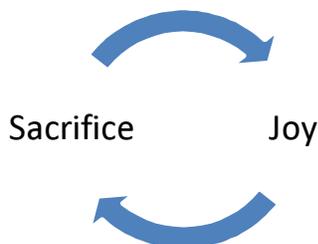
*From that time on Jesus began to explain to His disciples that he **must** go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke Him. "Never Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" (Matthew 16:21-22)*

It was hard for Peter to accept Jesus' statement because, even though Peter made the statement about who Jesus was, he didn't understand the fullness of what that meant. Similarly, when we think of what God has for us, and who He has made us to be, we always think in terms of the grown state we are in right now. **We don't think that sacrifice and change is necessary for what we are designed to produce.**

Sacrificial Focus – Being Wheat

Just like Peter, our focus even in the midst of revelation can need some adjustment. Jesus was not focused on what was going to be lost. He focused on what was going to be gained.

- **Sacrifice is natural** – Jesus used the natural lifecycle of wheat to show a spiritual truth. Just as wheat doesn't force itself from the stalk, but falls naturally, Jesus destiny through the cross to resurrection not only of Himself, but of all who would believe would follow suit.
- **Sacrifice is not about loss, but gain** – Jesus did not simply say he was going to die or suffer. He always saw the purpose behind the suffering
 - o **Hebrews 12:2** – *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross...*
- **Sacrifice and Joy are joined at the hip**



When we sacrifice, we get joy, and we sacrifice because we have joy. It becomes a cycle of giving and receiving, a life of looking to what we can do for others.

“...but in humility consider others better than yourselves” (Phil 2:3b)