

There's a particular part of the text which has been repeating in my head, over and over:

**"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very 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. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life."**

This part of our Gospel reading from John today seems to replay again and again to me. **"The hour has come..."**

Many times over the last few months we have heard in our Gospel readings:

"because his time had not come yet",

"his hour had not yet come,"

"because it was not his hour"....

We have been waiting for Jesus' hour to come in many of our gospel readings these last weeks...and now it is finally upon us: The hour has come.

But the idea on how this hour will unfold is a bit unsettling. For Christ will be glorified, but it will be through death on a cross. Is this the hour we truly want to see? The one we've been waiting for? Do we really want this hour to finally come?

#### **The grains of wheat:**

The grain of wheat is a metaphor for Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Jesus is explaining that he must die so that new life can be formed. Jesus cannot be held onto in his current physical sense. He must be let go of by the disciples, even by this world, and he will die, and then new fruit will come from his death and resurrection. The new fruit of followers, and of new ways of seeing the world and what it means to know God, and serve others. Out of death, Christ's death, new life will come.

It would be hard for the disciples, or even us to hear this idea: Out of death, great things will happen; new life will be formed.

Why is this so hard to grasp I wonder? Death forming something new and wonderful...

We see new life come from death all the time with the changing seasons around us, but when it comes to ourselves why do we want to hold on tight, like those grains of wheat, and not let go?

Well, I think the final sentence in this verse has the answer: **"Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life."**

➔ Love and Hate: two very strong words in our vocabulary, and yet so commonly thrown around without much thought sometimes.

If to love one's life will lead to losing it, then it makes sense to do the opposite, as we don't usually want to lose what we love.

But to love one's life, is about loving the things in our lives - the material aspects, where we place more importance on material items, power or status, in our lives. We will lose all those material aspects when we die. We don't get to take any of this with us when we die.

**"Those who love their life lose it..."**

There is also another side of this; which means that when we love something so much, we give up and lose our own moral compass because we have fallen into the pitfall of loving something more than God. Where we have found comfort and ease in worldly systems of material, power and status, rather than carrying our own cross...

**"Those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life."**

Maybe I'm the only one here who hears this and says to myself...well that's horrible!! If I hate my life in this world, why would I want to get stuck with it for eternal life!???

The word hate is best translated as "reject": **"Those who reject their life in this world keep it for eternal life."**

➔ ...in this world...

If we reject the life of this world, where we struggle with self-esteem, and systems which bombard us with stress, and negativity; A life where we are filled with emotional demons, and bodily suffering.

If we reject the life of this world's systems...and we don't fall in love with the broken promises of happiness to be found in material aspects, power and status...then we will be given a life worth holding onto for all eternity....

....AND this eternal life - is a life which was lived in poverty, suffered and died on a cross, and was locked in a dark tomb, and raised after three days,.... - this eternal life is a life worth seeing, so that we could know, and will know this hope and reality for ourselves.

So how does this all fit together, you may wonder, in truly living it into application of our lives and beliefs?

Well, what if it is not just speaking about our own personal individual lives of holding onto the grains of wheat which can be false positives, leading us to losing our lives? What if it is also about bigger societal systems which need to be let go of, and die, so that new life can come forward? What if it's bigger than us...?

Let me try and rephrase it for our context and era:

\*The hour has come...the time is now! If we continue to hold onto the seeds of old ways and old beliefs, thinking things will get better or change, they will not. We must let go. We must let things die. Let go of the old seeds of racism, sexism, homophobia, and the stigma of mental illness or addiction. We must let go of normalizing gun violence, bullying, work place harassment, poverty and homelessness. We must reject the models and systems which prosper and benefit from the misuse and abuse of human trafficking and the environment.

These are some of the loves of this world...some of the seeds we hold onto. Maybe you can think of more?

But out of dead grains of wheat we find new life. We find hope and direction from Christ. Out of death comes new life. Out of rejecting the life of this world, eternal life will be found. Christ's last words over the last supper promised new life, a new covenant – a new way of living into hope, love and forgiveness for all.

Where we might think there is no hope, there is hope and new life! There is new hope in voices- prophetic voices- from students marching for safer schools against gun violence. There is hope and new life in places like Aurora Commons and Mary's Place, food banks and Circles of Welcome for refugees. There is new life and hope wherever we look to Christ, and see that out of death new life comes.

We are the body of Christ in the world, we are called to go forth and let go of our loves of this world and our deadly seeds and to help other's let go of dead seeds also so that new life will grow.

We are called to serve, love, teach, forgive, and then do it all over again and again.

Let us reject the life this world wants to say is the only way, and proclaim Christ's way of life!

Christ died and Christ rose from the dead, to show us there is hope despite a world which loves to hold onto dead grains of wheat and is afraid of change.

As Christ changed our understanding of God's unconditional love for all of creation, may we also be filled with the Holy Spirit and change the ways of the world so that ALL may have new life.

Amen.