



March 18, 2018 John 12:20-33 & Jer. 31: 31-34

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Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other [Beck](#)

Stone, Naomi. [The Sacred Invitation](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Loneliness and God's Pleasure](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

### ENTERING THE SCENE:

As we enter more deeply into our Lenten reflections we, like the Greeks, want to see Jesus. We are slowly realizing that in order to see Jesus, we will have to also let “fall to the ground and die”, all that makes us think and choose as if our physical life is all there is for us. We too will have to “let go and let God” as Jesus will do. This “thunders” in our ears. But our inner “angel” whispers that this is truth, and it is for our benefit.

### John 12:20-33

20 Now there were some **Greeks** among those who went up to worship at the Feast. 21 They came to **Philip**, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." 22 **Philip** went to tell **Andrew**; **Andrew** and **Philip** in turn told Jesus. 23 Jesus replied, "The **hour** has come for the **Son of Man** to be **glorified**. 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. 25 The

man who **loves** his **life** will lose it, while the man who **hates** his **life** in this **world** will keep it for **eternal life**. 26 Whoever serves me must **follow me**; and where I am, my **servant** also will be. My **Father** will **honor** the one who serves me. 27 Now my **soul** is **troubled**, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this **hour**'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this **hour**. 28 **Father**, **glorify** your **name**!" Then a **voice** came from heaven, "I have **glorified** it, and will **glorify** it again." 29 The **crowd** that was there and heard it said it had **thundered**; others said an **angel** had spoken to him. 30 Jesus said, "This **voice** was for your **benefit**, not mine. 31 Now is the time for **judgment** on this **world**; now the **prince** of this **world** will be **driven out**. 32 But I, when I am **lifted up** from the **earth**, will **draw all** men to myself." 33 He said this to show the kind of **death** he was going to die.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Jesus, in this gospel, again invites you to follow him. What helps you to accept his invitation today?

**PRAYER:** Lord, you keep inviting me to follow you. But Lord, you are making it more and more difficult to do this with your talk of dying and hating my life. Like the grain on the stalk I don't want to be plucked, smashed or planted. I just want to wave in the breezes of life under your glorious sun. Help me as I learn slowly to trust that your invitation is a visitation of an angel, not the threat of thunder. Amen

### WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

**GREEKS:** One of the signs that the Kingdom of God was near was the inclusion of the Gentiles. Philip and Andrew, both, had Greek names. Their respect for the beliefs of the Jews led them to 'go through the proper channels' to see Jesus.

*What do you think Philip and Andrew thought of Jesus' response to the request of the Greeks? Do you exclude some people/events as not credible signs because they come from outside your belief system?*

**PHILIP:** Jesus called Philip himself. The Greeks, in coming to him, suggest that Philip's closeness to Jesus was well known.

*Who might you approach today to see Jesus? Who seems close to him? How do you know that?*

**ANDREW:** Andrew was the brother of Peter, who like Philip, came from Bethsaida in Galilee. Philip goes to Andrew before bringing the request of the Greeks to Jesus.

*Why did the two disciples feel the need to go together with the request? What do you think they made of his response?*

**HOUR:** At the wedding at Cana in Jn. 2:4, Jesus says his hour had not come. Now it has. Jesus knows that he must follow his call straight through into his death and resurrection. See Jn. 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; Mk. 14:35,41; Lk. 22:53 and Mt. 26:45.

*Think about how it must have felt for the disciples to hear Jesus say that his hour had come. Do you think they were excited that he would finally prove he was the Messiah, or do you think they shuddered at the thought of his impending death?*

**SON OF MAN:** Once again we hear Jesus describe himself with these words. I suspect that the disciples wished he would stop with

that, and get on to being the Messiah like they hoped he would.

*What are the ways you resist accepting Jesus' self-understanding as one of us? How might you let go of this?*

**GLORIFIED/GLORY:** In this gospel the cross is the moment of glory.

*Why would Jesus see his death as a moment of glory? How could his terrible death reveal God's beauty or nature?*



**WHEAT:** Down through the ages, people gathered the seeds from the wild grasses. . The wild grasses shed their seeds and made gathering difficult. Naturally, they chose those with the most seeds on a stalk. Eventually, this process developed a hybrid that held its seeds, and made agriculture possible. Since this hybrid did not shed its seeds, people had to work to separate them from the stalk.

*Jesus uses the metaphor of the seed to explain his death. The paradox of putting death and glory together eludes the disciples. Human participation in the process of causing this death is partially explained by the understanding of the use of the word, wheat. How does this help you understand God's process?*

**FALLS:** In this world of space and time, falling is the opposite of rising. In God's reality where all is one, and there is no opposition, falling and rising are two aspects of the same event.

*Follow the seed through its process of falling and rising. Can you connect with the paradox of the parable of the wheat?*

**SEED:** We use the word wheat when we talk about something that will be eaten or planted. Jesus uses bread to remain with us in the Eucharist.

*Examine the process that happens as the wheat is transformed into bread. Does that process feel like your life? How is Jesus 'planted' in you? How does the bread in the Eucharist feed you?*

**LOVES:** In the Hebrew language they do not have words to express degrees of intensity. Jesus uses the words love and hate to express extremes in his example. Here love refers to anyone who values their physical life more than their eternal life. The paradox is that the person who fears death is already dead, whereas the person who has ceased to fear death has at that moment begun to live.

*Consider the ways you hold on to physical life at the expense of your eternal life. What do you have to lose in order to win?*

**LIFE:** Life for Jesus means more than physical existence. His Incarnation was all about helping us to see this larger reality.

*If there were never an Easter, how would that affect your understanding of the word life?*

**HATES:** Here hates indicates someone who values their physical life more than their eternal life.

*How can you understand loving your physical life less than your eternal life?*

**WORLD:** The world is that which is made up of space/time and those realities that are limited by these parameters.

*What choices do you make that reveal that this world is not the sum and total of your life?*

**ETERNAL LIFE:** Physical life is the beautiful school of eternity. It has exciting and demanding classes.

*Explore the 'courses' that you have taken already. What other 'courses' might you need to graduate into eternity?*

**FOLLOW ME:** In other words, do as I do. Be where I am. Love like I love.

*How is this Lent helping you to do as Jesus does, be where Jesus is, and love like Jesus loves?*

**SERVANT:** A servant does what the master requests. A little later on Jesus says he no longer calls them servants but friends.

*Do you need to be a servant of Jesus before you can be called a friend of Jesus? If yes, why?*

**FATHER:** Calling God Father, in the way Jesus does, ultimately brings him into conflict with the prevailing ideas of God.

*Can you, with some degree of comfort, claim his same understanding of God? If not, why not?*

**NAME:** Jesus asks God to glorify God's name. This sounds like a strange request at first glance. In revealing God's true nature in Jesus, God does glorify God's name. Humanity can now really experience God fully in Jesus.

*How do you see God's glory in Jesus? Do you think humanity could have ever come to this realization of God without Jesus? What about Jesus helps you see God's glory best?*

**HONOR:** God honors Jesus in the Resurrection. God honors us when we accept Jesus as the glory of God. To be honored is to be recognized with gratitude and praise.

*Have you ever thought about being honored by God? Is it difficult to imagine this? How do you think you will feel when God recognizes you with gratitude and praise?*

**SOUL:** Jesus says his soul is troubled. We are en-souled at birth, and our life is the process of developing a soul that is unique to us for all eternity.

*What do you think Jesus means when he says his soul is troubled? Have you ever thought about Jesus having a soul like yours?*

**TROUBLED:** Jesus seems to be unsure about what he should do now. In other gospels he asks if the cup can pass, or that God's will might be done without his dying.

*Think about the feelings evoked by the word troubled. How does your body respond to the word trouble?*

**VOICE:** The voice that he heard at his Baptism, speaks again, and assures Jesus that he is indeed doing God's will. God will make that apparent in the resurrection. Jesus needs to hear from God that he is on the right track.

*Have you ever heard God's 'voice' as you needed help in making a decision? How would you describe the voice?*

**CROWD:** The crowd that came to see Jesus is aware of something happening to Jesus. Some hear thunder; others think it is an angel speaking to him. The crowd is eager to see what will happen next.

*Why do you think some hear thunder, and others hear angels speaking? Can that say anything about a person's expectations?*

**THUNDERED:** Thunder implies a storm. It also usually is a loud sound.

*What implications does thunder have in this text?*

**ANGEL:** Angels are messengers of God.

*What implications might angels as messengers have in this text?*

**BENEFIT:** God's communication, whether by thunder or angel is for the benefit of the crowd.

*Would thunder or an angel work best for you?*

**JUDGEMENT:** Jesus' death will hold up the truth for all to see and be a cause for making a choice. Now people have to decide. Is Jesus' understanding of God believable? Yes or no!

*How has scripture study this Lent helped you make a choice? Has a deeper understanding of God in Jesus begun to take shape?*

**PRINCE:** Jesus is the son of the Father and therefore a prince. Since his kingdom is not of this world (space/time), he speaks of a prince of space/time; in other words, someone whose reality is limited.

*Do you experience the limits of 'this world'? Are you confident that this limit will be removed once we go beyond space/time? Does this help you to trust God's process?*

**DRIVEN OUT:** Jesus is driven out into the desert in week one of Lent. Now we see Satan being driven out of power in week five.

*Who is doing the driving in these two events? In other words, who is in the driver's seat?*

**LIFTED UP:** Moses lifted up the bronze serpent, and people were healed of that which was killing them. Jesus is going to be lifted up, and draw all people into himself.

*How has studying the word lifted up a healing for you? Can that which could kill you now cure you?*

**DRAW ALL:** We began this study with the Greeks who represent all the others in the gospel. We are the Greeks of today.

*What draws you into God in this passage of scripture? What are you attracted by?*

**DEATH:** Death is the apparent victor if only seen from the viewpoint of space/time.

*How does this passage of scripture liberate you from the limits of death?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** **Jn. 12:20** // Jn. 1:43; **Jn.12: 21** // Jn. 1:40, 43; **Jn. 12:23** // Jn. 2; 4; **Jn. 12:24** // Is. 53:10ff; 1 Cor. 15:36; **Jn. 12:25** // Mt. 16:25; Mk. 8:35; Lk. 9:24; **Jn. 12:26** // Jn. 14:3; 17:24; Mt. 16:24; **Jn. 12:27**// Jn. 6:38; 18:11; Lk. 22:42; Heb. 5:7f; **Jn. 12:28** // Jn. 2:11; 17:5; **Jn. 12:29** // Ex. 19: 18-19; **Jn. 12:30** // Jn. 11:42; 16:11; **Jn. 12:31** // Lk. 10:18; Rev. 12:9; **Jn. 12:32** // Jn. 3:14; 8:28;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Jer. 31:31-34; [Ps. 51:3-4, 12-15](#); Heb. 5:7-9; Jn. 12:20-33;

Revised Common Lectionary Jer. 31:31-34; [Ps. 51: 1-12](#); Heb. 5:5-10; Jn. 12:20-33;

#### **SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:**

If you lose yourself, you will gain it. This is the witness of so much of our experience. When you stop living for yourself, when you let go of the need to gain your own prominence, you find it coming to you without asking. When you leave behind your focus of attention

upon yourself, and turn to another in love, you discover the person you were looking for in yourself. When you come to the moment of making your faith your own, it means letting go of the personal project of making yourself into something on your own, and turning to trust-trusting in a God whom you have decided can be trusted. And in that letting-go to have discovered what you were striving for preciously, now comes into your life. Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2015. Pgs.63-64

Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire. -St. Catherine of Siena

"Eternity is not something that begins after you are dead. It is going on all the time." - Charlotte Perkins Gilman

"How is the fullness of God's glory achieved in each one of us? If what I do and say is for the glory of God, my words and deeds are full of God's glory. If my plans and undertakings are for the glory of God, if my food and drink and all my actions are for the glory of God, then it is to me also that the words are addressed: "The earth is full of his glory.""- Origen, Homilies on the Visions of Isaiah

A tree gives glory to God by being a tree. For in being what God means it to be it is obeying Him. It "consents," so to speak, to His creative love. It is expressing an idea which is in God and which is not distinct from the essence of God, and therefore a tree imitates God by being a tree. This particular tree will give glory to God by spreading out its roots in the earth and raising its branches into the air and the light in a way that no other tree before or after it ever did or will do.

Thomas Merton. *New Seeds of Contemplation*. (New York: New Directions Books, 1961). p. 29.

To be in the Resurrection means to identify oneself as the act of living in its creative continuity from moment to moment. The Resurrection is now and is ever moving. It cannot be clung to, for it is always ascending toward the future, the invisible, the unpredictable. Pg. 139. Bruteau, Beatrice. *The Grand Option*:

Cyril of Alexandria (375-444) explains how the cross becomes Jesus' glory. "The perfect fulfillment of his glory and the fullness of his fame clearly lie in this, in his suffering for the life of the world and making a new way through his Resurrection for the resurrection of all."

The victory over death, which the resurrection promises us, as perishable creatures, depends wholly upon God's own creativity, which takes on the power of death, draws it into the divine life, and thereby overcomes it. Alan Lewis

There is *terminal* death and there is *paschal* death. Terminal death is a death that ends life and ends possibilities. Paschal death, like terminal death, is real. However, paschal death is a death that, while ending one kind of life, opens the person undergoing it to receive a deeper and richer form of life. The image of the grain of wheat falling into the ground and dying so as to produce a new life is an image of paschal death. Pg. 146. Rolheiser, Ronald. [The Holy Longing](#).

The followers of Jesus were after all those who had left the safe routines of work and family life. The early church consisted of those who had left the sanctuaries of temple, tradition, and national identity. The church understands itself as nomadic, as the wandering people of God, and its personal biography is that of a pilgrimage of learning. Recurring in the biblical traditions is the idea that only the one who is willing to risk a loss will prevail, and only the one who is willing to face uncertainty of the streets of life will find God. The gift of life demands a risk-taking attitude, even to the point of losing one's life for the benefit of others. Moreover, the world is made up so as to favor and reward a risk-taking attitude. "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. (Jn. 12:24). Gregersen, Neils Henrik. [Risk and Religion: Toward a Theology of Risk Taking](#). *Zygon*. 6/2003 Pg. 368.

And the day came when the risk it took to remain tight inside the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom. Anais Nin

Jn. 12.20–50: End of Jesus' public ministry. 20: Greeks, likely Gentiles rather than Greek-speaking Jews (cf. 7.34–35). 21–22: Would-be followers initially encounter Jesus indirectly, through someone who is already a disciple. They may approach Philip because his name is Greek ("horse-lover"). 23: The hour has come, perhaps a foreshadowing that the Gospel will be preached to "Greeks" (i.e., Gentiles). 24–25: Jesus apparently refuses to meet with the Greeks. On grain imagery, see 1 Cor 15.36. 28: A voice . . . from heaven, a rabbinic term was Heb "bat qol," "daughter of the voice" or "echo," (cf. 11.41). 29: Cf. the Israelites' response at Mount Sinai (Ex 19.18–19). Heb "qol," at Sinai (esp. Ex 19.19), may be voice or thunder as well. 31: The trial motif concludes. Ruler of this world, the devil (14.30; 16.11). 34: [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

## SELECTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2015. Pgs.62-64. To order contact [Carol.Oberfoell@loras.edu](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@loras.edu)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2009. Pgs. 79-82.

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2005. Pgs. 72-5.