

THE HOUR

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John 12:27-36

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 judgement 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.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Context

Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave and a plot to kill Jesus took shape in John 11. Now, with that dark horizon looming, Jesus turns to the meaning of what is to come.

In each of the four gospels Jesus not only hints at his death, he speaks directly about it. Often, his disciples are confused, as they are here in this passage. Sometimes they downright deny that Jesus will die: "the Messiah remains forever" (v.34).

Undeterred, Jesus pushes the meaning of death and "forever" into new territory.

In the history of Christian reflection on the meaning of Jesus' death, several theological "models" took form. These are often called "atonement theories" because they clarify how God and humanity become "at-one" again (reconciled) through Jesus Christ. The three primary models are:

1. **The Ransom Theory** - Christ's death is an act of ransom (payment) to the devil for the world's freedom from sin and death.
2. **The Substitutionary or Sacrificial Victim Model** - Christ's death is necessary to satisfy the anger of God toward Sin.

3. **The Moral Influence Theory** - Jesus' martyrdom (death) inspires more positive moral behavior in humankind.

Jesus in the Gospel of John, especially in this scene, resists a simple reduction to one of these theories. Instead, as we see from the opening lines of John's Gospel, atonement is found in **relationship**: a **saving** relationship of God **with** humanity embodied (en-fleshed) by Jesus as the Christ, and present from his birth to his death and beyond the grave.

Rev. Michael writes more about this *Incarnational Atonement* in a blog post called "Good Friday?"

www.michaelswartzentruber.com/blog/good-friday

Big Ideas

1. Jesus' talked about his death, so should we.
2. Death is **real**, but it is **not the end**.
3. **Die empty**. There is too much wealth at the cemetery: too much unspent love, presence, and giftedness hoarded up and not poured out.

Reflect

1. Read the scripture passage carefully and slowly. What word or image stands out to you? Why?
2. What does the death of Jesus mean to your faith and relationship with God?
3. Why might it be difficult to talk with friends or family about death? Reflect on a difficult or awkward conversation.
4. Have you talked about or prepared for your death? Why or why not? If so, how?
5. Have you learned any lessons from journeying with those in the last stages of life?

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