

The fifth Sunday in Lent. The scripture text is taken from John 12:20-26

If you had to buy milk, eggs, and bread, would you go to Bass Pro Shop? No, of course not. If you wanted to eat a big juicy hamburger, would you go to a sushi restaurant, like Shogun's? No, of course not.

An outdoor sports store is an unlikely place to find groceries, and a sushi restaurant is an unlikely place to sink your teeth into a great hamburger.

So what about glory? Where would you go, what would you do to find glory? The world has many ideas and suggestions on what one would do, and where one would go to find glory.

But in our gospel text for today, Jesus teaches that, glory is something Christians find in unlikely places. Real glory is found in service to God, one another and in death.

Just days before His crucifixion, word came to Jesus that a group of God-fearing, wisdom seeking Greeks wanted to meet with Him.

Isn't it interesting how unnamed gentiles (the wise-men) sought Jesus at the beginning of His life, at His birth, and now some unnamed gentiles (the Greeks) sought Jesus as He moves closer to the end of His earthly life?

When Jesus heard that this group of Greeks wanted to meet with Him, it reminded Him that His mission was soon drawing to a close.

And so He said: "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." (John 12:23). How was it, that Jesus would be glorified?

Jesus would find glory in an unlikely way. Jesus explained: "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." (John 12:24).

With an excellent illustration, Jesus helps us to see that He would find glory in death. Glory in death? Doesn't death signal defeat? Doesn't death signal a loss? Where is the glory in that?

If we didn't think death was such a bad thing, we would never bother to go to the doctor when we get sick or injured.

If we didn't think death was such a bad thing, we would never shed a tear at a funeral. How is it, that Jesus can say that death is glorious?

We need to understand how Jesus' death is glorious, when we grasp the seed illustration Jesus used.

Just as the purpose of a seed is to be buried in the ground where it can germinate and grow into something productive, Jesus wants us to know that the purpose of His coming to this world was to be buried.

Jesus came to die, to pay for our sins. But death would not be the end of Jesus. Just as a seed that is buried, sprouts and grows into a fruit-bearing tree.

So Jesus, would come back to life and bear much fruit, eternal life for all those who believe in Him. Therefore Jesus' death on the cross was not a defeat, it was an important step in accomplishing His God-given mission.

When we understand the glorious nature of Jesus' death, we begin to see how we too can find glory in our death, and in the death of every believer.

The death of a believer, like the death of Jesus, is not the end. It is the beginning of an eternal glory in the presence of God, the angels and the saints who have gone before us.

But not everyone who dies will find glory. Jesus made that very clear when He said: "Those who love their life, lose it, and those who hate their life in this world, will keep it for eternal life." (John 12:25)

If you want to find glory, don't look where the world out there, looks for glory. The world out there, thinks that money, fame, material things, status, and all the trappings that go with it, are glory.

These things, however, are only temporary, these things will be pass, these things produce nothing but fading glory.

Think about this, what happens we hear about these people of fame from years ago, I call them; "has-beens".

Think of the "has been actors, or the "has-been" politicians, or "has-beens" in general, who were popular long ago, trying influence the culture today, by calling for this or for that, and pretty much most people just ignore them. Maybe years ago, that "has-been" "who-ever", could have done something, but not now, it's just "passe."

The word we live in is nothing more than fading glory. The life we now live is nothing more than a seed.

It really isn't that beautiful, nor is it the kind of glorious life, God intended us to have forever. When we think this life is the only one we have, however, we start to run after things that don't matter.

For instance, we think that a better job, a bigger house, or driving the right kind of car, will make our lives more glorious.

But this is like taking that toy, "Mr. Potato Head", (Remember Mr. Potato Head?) and interchanging parts, to make Mr. Potato Head look pretty. Well guess what? When all is said and done, Mr. Potato Head is still a lowly spud, you can't make him look pretty.

Or think about what Sara Palin said: "You put lip-stick on a pig, but it is still a pig."

This life is only a seed for the next life. Die a believer in Jesus Christ, and God will raise you up to an eternal life, gloriously free from sin and suffering.

Like the Greeks who seek wisdom, eagerly seek Jesus every day in His Word. And seek Him here in the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion.

Death is not the only unlikely place a believer will find glory. A believer will also find glory in service.

Jesus said: "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor." (John 12:26)

While the world out there says, that if you have real people serving you, you have arrived, you found glory. Jesus says: "Not so". Real glory comes from serving God and one another.

In God's eyes, the parent who faithfully helps his or her children with math and spelling, or like the neighbor who gets his or hands dirty, helping his or her neighbor with the yard work, or like the person who doesn't have a lot to give in terms of resources, but who gives of his or her time to the church, so that others will be served, and does this out of thankfulness for God's grace, will receive more glory than the most successful professional politician, movie star, or athlete.

Knowing that our purpose in life is to serve God, will move us to pray that God's name be glorified in everything we do and experience.

Our text for today can better explain what I mean. Although the thought of His approaching death twisted Jesus' stomach into knots, Jesus prayed: "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. Father, glorify your name." (John 12:27)

Is that what we pray when we are faced with difficulty? Or do we usually pray, "Father, I am having some real problems here, things aren't going as planned, how about glorifying me?"

But Jesus knew that glorifying God's name would eventually lead to an everlasting glory for others and Himself.

And so, Jesus was content to submit Himself to His Father's will, even if it meant He had to endure excruciating pain, suffering, and death.

If God has seen fit, to have you go through any challenge, or difficulty or hardship, pray that His will be done and that His name be glorified.

Pray to God, to help you focus on that challenge, or on that difficulty, or on that hardship, pray that God not take it away from you, but that God will help to see you through it, and to make you a stronger person for having endured what you have gone through.

Pray that, as you go through this challenge, or difficulty, or hardship, that can serve as an example for others to see. So that if the question is asked, "How did you get through this, you can say, it wasn't by my own strength, it was by God's grace, praise Him.

When Jesus asked that His heavenly Father's name be glorified, God answered Him from heaven in a booming voice, that sounded like thunder to some.

The Father said that He had glorified His name already through Jesus' ministry, and that He would do so again when Jesus faithfully accomplished the saving of souls.

Although God may not answer your prayers with a booming voice from heaven, He has spoken to you through His Holy Word, through prayer, and through other people.

Sure, the world out there, may think that God's Holy Word is a lot of noise, but that is the world, not us.

When we come before God's throne of grace, when we listen closely to the Word of God, we will find, the comforting promises, you and I need to carry on in this life, in such a way, that you and I seek to bring glory, honor, and praise to God's Holy name, and not our own.

In closing, Jesus teaches us that real glory (not the glory of the world which fades) is found in death, Jesus' death, and death of believers.

But glory is also found in Christian to to the church and to one another. Glory is found even in suffering.

May God help us to remember, and to keep these truths, so that we keep our faith, focused on Jesus Christ, His life, His death and His glorious resurrection, until He calls us home to enjoy the everlasting glory of heaven. Amen.

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus Christ, the glory that the world chases after is temporary and will fade, it is a glory focused on self. You have taught us, not to seek our own glory, but to seek your glory in our lives, by serving You, Your Church, one another, and by our death, in which we will be born unto eternal life, eternal glory. Prepare our hearts and minds as we will soon enter into Holy Week and joy of Easter, so that we see the glory of your resurrection and the gift of eternal life that it brings. All these things we humbly pray, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.