



Council of Bishops

The United Methodist Church



“The Fierce Urgency of Now”

Dismantling Racism: Council of Bishops Lenten Devotional Series

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Scripture: John 12:20-36

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, 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. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

“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. Father, glorify your name!”

Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up[a] from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

The crowd spoke up, “We have heard from the Law that the Messiah will remain forever, so how can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this ‘Son of Man’?”

Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going. Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light.” When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

Scripture: Isaiah 49:1-7

Listen to me, you islands;
hear this, you distant nations:
Before I was born the LORD called me;
from my mother’s womb he has spoken my name.
He made my mouth like a sharpened sword,

in the shadow of his hand he hid me;
he made me into a polished arrow
and concealed me in his quiver.
He said to me, "You are my servant,
Israel, in whom I will display my splendor."
But I said, "I have labored in vain;
I have spent my strength for nothing at all.
Yet what is due me is in the LORD's hand,
and my reward is with my God."
And now the LORD says—
he who formed me in the womb to be his servant
to bring Jacob back to him
and gather Israel to himself,
for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD
and my God has been my strength—
he says:
"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant
to restore the tribes of Jacob
and bring back those of Israel I have kept.
I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."
This is what the Lord says—
the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel—
to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation,
to the servant of rulers:
"Kings will see you and stand up,
princes will see and bow down,
because of the Lord, who is faithful,
the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

Key points:

- Lent is always a time to pay attention to our walk with Jesus and our witness in the world.
- The Gospel we preach with Jesus is not always pain-free but it always has room for you and me.
- As we say yes to Jesus and consider our work as Christians in the world we must remember:
 - We can't do anything in God's name without God's power
 - We can't love God's people without God's presence
 - We can't transform the world without the light of Christ and the courage to be honest and the willingness to be humble.
- Jesus is aware of the fierce urgency of now saying, "While you have the light believe in the light."
- As followers of Jesus, we are called to *walk in the light* until peace, justice, liberation, and love are made manifest throughout the world.

Questions for contemplation:

1. How are you living as salt and light in the world?
2. In what ways are you responding to the "fierce urgency of now" in dismantling racism?
3. What does Jesus' call to "walk in the light" mean to you?
