

## Easter: A Kernel of Wheat

### Learning

**Introducing the Parable** (some example content you can engage with to prep and/or as a group)

- **Read John 12:20-26**
- **Context:** The parable itself is quite simple here. In the flow of the narrative Jesus has just explained how he is the 'Good Shepherd' and how he will lay his life down for his sheep (Jn. 10). This section of teaching is then followed by the story of Jesus resuscitating Lazarus from the dead (Jn 11)! The Greeks referred to in v. 20 are likely "god-fearers" who have not converted to Judaism yet.
- **Themes:** Losing your life in this world preserves it for eternity and the world to come. Connect back to our themes from January and February, specifically Mike's word on sacrificial love, unless you die there will not be good fruit.
- **Culture:** An embryo grows within a seed, when that seed is separated and thrown into moist soil it normally takes 2 days for this embryo to break through.
- **Interesting Words:**
  - "The hour" refers to Jesus' death throughout John's Gospel
  - "Glorified" refers to the septuagint translation of Isaiah 52:12, where it says the suffering servant will be "lifted up" (consider reading Isaiah 52:13-15).
  - Anyone who "loves" their life, the word love here is *phileo* (fil-eh'-o), it is the friendship type of love. It means to be fond of, have affection for, attached to in sentiment or feeling, it can even mean kiss.
  - Anyone who "hates" their life, the word here is *miseo* (mis-eh'-o), comes from the word for hatred. It can mean to detest, persecute, or love less.
- **Quote for reflection:**

"There is a fear that incapacitates us for dealing with God, and there is a fear that pulls us out of our preoccupation with ourselves, our feelings, or our circumstances into a world of wonder. It pulls us out of ourselves into the very action of God." Eugene Petersen.

**Dialogue Questions** (some example questions for this content above)

- What is the dominating idea here? Although it is simple, unpack the parable!
- How do we deal with Jesus' implying that you should "hate your life"? (This would make a great book title) What does this have to do with Easter?
- Eugene Petersen translates v. 25 this way, "In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you'll have it forever, real and eternal" (MSG). What do you think of this translation?

**Implication Questions** (some example questions/challenges that engage real life now)

- What does this passage imply about the Kingdom of God? How would that work itself out in your life, relationships, hobbies, job?
- Have you experienced the seemingly paradoxical nature of Jesus' invitation here? To embrace hurt, death, detachment, only to wind up experiencing new life, joy unspeakable, and resurrection? What stories come to your mind?
- Have you become too "close" of friends with your life? Too attached perhaps... Spend a moment in prayer and reflection, is the Lord asking you to detach from so you can experience this Easter joy?