

# Dying to Self, Living for Christ:

## *What Jesus Taught About Fruitful Living*

This morning, we're looking at something Jesus said in John chapter 12. Let's stand together for a moment in honor of God's Word. I'll start reading at verse 23.

Jesus said: "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."

Then, down in verses 27 and 28, Jesus continues:

"Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name."

And then a voice came from heaven saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."

You may be seated.

The theme of this message is the glory of God. In verse 23, we might have expected Jesus to say, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be crucified." But no—Jesus looked beyond the cross to the glory that would come afterward.

He used the image of a seed to teach a powerful spiritual truth:

There is no glory without suffering.

No fruitful life without death.

No victory without surrender.

A seed, by itself, is small and weak. But when it's planted—when it dies—that's when the miracle begins. That's when multiplication happens. Beauty and bounty come when a seed is buried and fulfills its purpose.

If a seed could talk, I'm sure it would complain about being dropped into a deep, dark hole. But it can't become what it was made to be unless it's planted, buried, and rooted. That's how growth happens.

God built this principle into creation. Everything He does on the earth follows this pattern: seed, time, and harvest. I'm glad it's spring—time to plant and see things bloom! Scripture says, "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest shall not cease." It's not just a natural law—it's a spiritual one. You reap what you sow.

Ecclesiastes 3:2 says, "A time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted."

You can't expect a harvest if you haven't planted a seed.

And without Good Friday, there wouldn't have been an Easter Sunday.

Jesus came to be planted by the Father's hand. He was the seed sown into the soil of this world. And guess what? So are we.

## **You're Not Buried—You're Planted**

Look at your neighbor—that's who we're talking about—God's children. We're not weeds—we're seeds! Aren't you glad God doesn't call us weeds? Seeds may seem small or insignificant, but they carry life—God's life.

But that life can't be released until we're willing to be planted—until we allow God to put us exactly where He wants us. He's already picked the spot. He knows the best place for us to grow. But here's the hard part: we have to die to ourselves.

The only way to live a fruitful life is to follow Jesus in His example—dying, being buried, and rising in new life. That's what Paul meant when he said in Philippians 3:10:

"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death."

When Jesus called the disciples, He was calling them to die—to lay down their lives. And in that death, they found life. They brought forth a harvest that glorified God. He calls us to do the same.

In verses 24–26, Jesus lays out four contrasts—four choices that come with surrender:

## Loneliness or Fruitfulness

"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it produces much grain."

## Losing Your Life or Keeping It for Eternity

"He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."

## Serving Yourself or Serving Christ

"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me."

## Pleasing Yourself or Receiving God's Honor

"If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."

There's no greater blessing than being honored by God. Knowing that you're planted in the place He prepared for you is the best place to be.

## Be Patient—Your Season Is Coming

A group of believers once visited a missionary station in a remote area. They were impressed by the work—but also felt isolated. No stores, no restaurants, no modern comforts. One visitor said, "You've certainly buried yourselves out here."

The missionary replied, "No, we haven't buried ourselves. We've been planted."

And that's the difference. To be planted means God put you there on purpose. It reminds me of Psalm 1, where it says the one who delights in God's Word will be:

"Like a tree planted by rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in season, whose leaf will not wither, and whatever he does shall prosper."

That's true prosperity—not money or power, but being rooted in God's will.

But what if you feel like your harvest is overdue? You've been doing good, but nothing's growing? Galatians says:

"Don't grow weary in doing good, for in due season, you will reap if you don't lose heart."

Some of you might feel like that season is long overdue. You're tired. You're wondering if anything's happening beneath the surface. But listen—don't give up. You might not see the results yet, but that doesn't mean God isn't working.

You don't plant a seed one day and see a tree the next. You prepare the soil. You plant. You water. And then—you wait. Only God can bring the increase.

Sometimes, we want to rush things. We want to help God along. But when we tamper with the seed and try to dig it up, we actually hinder the harvest.

The parable of the sower in Luke 8 says that the good seed bears fruit with patience. That's the key. You can do everything else right, but you risk losing the harvest if you don't wait on God.

Think about Esau. He gave up his birthright for a bowl of stew. Billy Graham called it "a bowl of chili." All because he couldn't wait five more minutes for dinner! And he lost everything.

Faith is about believing when you can't see. It's about trusting when nothing makes sense. You give your tithes, your time, your talents—and you wait. And God says, "It's coming back to you." Maybe a little soggy, but it's coming!

## **Will You Pray "Father, Save Me" or "Father, Glorify Your Name"?**

Jesus knew the cross was coming. Verse 27 says:

"Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name."

I don't love how some Bibles separate those verses with a heading. It breaks up the thought. Jesus wasn't questioning God's will. He wasn't asking, "What should I do?"—He knew. He asked, "What should I say?"

And in your hardest moments, you've got two prayers to choose from:

- "Father, save me."
- Or "Father, glorify Your name."

That's it. Two options.

You're facing a trial, standing before a wall, surrounded by uncertainty. Which prayer will you pray? Jesus prayed for God's glory.

And when He did, heaven responded.

"I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

God the Father answered His Son and gave Him a double assurance—His life had glorified God, and so would His death.

Can you imagine that? Always pleasing the Father? Never sinning, never failing, never making a mistake? Jesus did that. He was the spotless Lamb of God.

Pilate said, "I find no fault in this man." And the only fault Jesus ever carried was ours. He died not for His sin—but for ours.

His whole life, and even His death, brought glory to God.

So here's the bottom line. We'll cling to our plans if we're looking for comfort. We'll never be planted. We'll float around, unrooted, unfruitful. But if we yield our lives and let God plant us—if we die to self—we will never be alone. And we'll bear fruit that brings glory to God.

Jesus was planted in death—and then came Sunday morning. The resurrection. The first fruits. And because of what He did, we too, will rise.

God has a great plan for you. You've got a bright future in Him.

Maybe today, you feel like you're stuck in a container. You've grown comfortable, and you don't want to move. But God, the Master Gardener, is nudging you. He's loosening the soil, squeezing the sides, and preparing a new place to plant you.

He's dug the hole. He's cleared the rocks. He's ready.

Let Him plant you. Let your faith be the Miracle-Gro that helps you grow and bloom. Let Jesus shine through your life. If He's stirring you, don't resist.

Trust Him. Yield to Him. Let Him plant you.