

The Passover festival drew to Jerusalem people from all over the world. When people heard that someone called Jesus raised up a dead man named Lazarus (ch. 11), the crowd multiplied. But when certain Greeks found Philip to tell him, respectfully, "... we wish to see Jesus," the story shifted dramatically.

Peter told Andrew, and Andrew told Jesus, and Jesus said it was now time to die. Whoa! That seems like a pretty big leap, doesn't it? What was there about a few expatriates wanting to make his acquaintance that Jesus heard as his own death sentence?

Last week's reading included the well-used words, "God so loved the world." For most of his ministry as described in the Gospel of John the non-Jewish "world" largely ignored Jesus, until those Greeks asked to see him. Now that the "world" was turning to him too, Jesus seemed to understand that the purpose of his living had been fulfilled; the time had come to begin the purposeful dying he referred to as being "glorified." He would die for the same purpose he lived, "to draw all people to myself." (12:32) There would be no reprieve, his death was a given.

Linda Burturian, writing for Theolog, the blog of *Christian Century*, <http://theolog.org/> recalled her sister once advising her, "Prefer the given." Confronted by the limits of time, resources, and others' demands, we easily wear ourselves out with such struggling that fuels resentment. When we learn to "prefer the given," Burturian writes, "it is like letting out the breath I didn't know I was holding." Accepting what is, when it cannot be changed, trusting that even the worst of times will become an avenue for the grace of God.

Jesus said as much when he told his hearers that a grain of wheat, in falling to the earth and dying, opens the way to an abundant harvest. Suffering cruel injustice, as Jesus did, or enduring the various agonies of body or spirit common to us all is not "good." It's terrible. The Christian witness is that there is no evil which God cannot bend to serve his gracious will, not illness, or heartache, or death, even death on a cross. When injustice or suffering bedevil our path, preventing us from pursuing things that feel essential to our survival, we have the option of preferring acceptance over resentment. To "prefer the given" throws open the gates of grace so that we have courage to live the Jesus life. That life, Jesus said, is one in which "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also." (12:26) The servant's post is at the side of the Master, even when that is at the foot of the cross.



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