

'If Anyone Serves Me, the Father will Honor Him' (John 12.26b)

Pastor Gene Giguere, April 12, 2026

Reading

And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.”

Introduction

1) Good morning, Church!

We are in the Gospel of John looking at verses **25 & 26** of chapter **12**. These verses, beginning with verse **24**, contain some of Jesus’ most profound statements – statements that get to the very core of what it means to be a disciple.

They serve as a paradigm for the Christian life, a life which Jesus lived for us in prototype.

In verse **24**, Jesus says, “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”

When Jesus said this, He was only a few days away from ‘falling into the earth’ Himself.

The idea is that only if He died would He be able to bring forth the great harvest of life that He has!

By dying Jesus has given life to us and to millions upon millions who put their faith in Him.

Then Jesus went on to explain the principle of ‘what is true of the Master is true of the servant.’ As His followers, Jesus expects us to reproduce our life, to lead others to Him. And, as with the Lord Himself, me reproducing my life is going to require a death: my own – a death to self.

The passage is magnificent in its construction.

He begins by talking clearly about Himself: “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (**John 12:23**).

Jesus is about to die and be glorified in His death.

Then He says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (**John 12:24**).

While Jesus is clearly still talking about Himself and His imminent glorification, the language is now more inclusive:

“Unless A GRAIN OF WHEAT falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”

Then, in the next verse, He clearly moves to His followers:

“Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him” (**John 12:25-26**).

Notice the promise here: the one who serves Jesus will be honored by the Father.

“Honor” here is **τιμάω**; It means to “show high regard for” someone; to place a high value upon them. ^{1 2} Just as the Father glorified Jesus in His death, so

¹ Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 1004–5.

² It’s used of Jesus in John 5:23, for all should “honor [**τιμάω**] the Son, just as they honor [**τιμάω**] the Father. Whoever does not honor [**τιμάω**] the Son does not honor [**τιμάω**] the Father who sent him.” It’s used often of honoring parents (Matthew 15:4, 19:19; Mark 7:10, 10:19; Luke 18:20; Ephesians 6:2; cf., Matthew 15:6). The early Church used it to describe the honor that should be shown to elder members of the community (1 Clement 21:6: “Let us fear the Lord Jesus [Christ], whose blood was given for us. Let us reverence our rulers; let us honor [**τιμάω**] our elders; let us

the Father will glorify all believers who die to themselves and live to Him in this life.

This is a reference to the rewards that will be awarded to believers at the Bema Seat judgment of Christ, including our uniform of glory.

✠ Each and every believer will stand before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote: “Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat [or, better, *the evaluation bench*] of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil” (2 Corinthians 5:8-10).

The word “must” here is *δεῖ*, a verb indicating *a necessity* – and, in this case, a divine necessity.³ It is something that “must” take place.⁴

There is nothing – absolutely nothing – a believer can do to escape this coming evaluation.

Plummer calls it “a divine decree which cannot be evaded.”⁵

Dr. Paul Barnett writes,

“Believers not only have a divinely made appointment with Christ as judge, but it is one at which each will be carefully scrutinized and his deeds revealed to him.”⁶ Indeed.

instruct our young men in the lesson of the fear of God. Let us guide our women toward that which is good”), or to those who are truly widows (1 Timothy 5:3) or to those who teach the Word of God (Didache 4:1: “My child, thou shalt remember both night and day him that speaks unto thee the Word of God; thou shalt honors [τιμῶ] him as thou dost the Lord, for where the teaching of the Lord is given, there is the Lord ...”).

³ “The word “must” is regularly used for actions decreed by God, powerfully strengthening the divinely ordained and unavoidable character of the occasion.” Barnett, Paul, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), p. 275.

⁴ Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 213–14.

⁵ Plummer, A., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (ICC; Edinburgh, 1915), p.156.

⁶ Barnett, Paul, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), pp. 274–77.

This divine evaluation will take place so that “each one” of us “may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil” (2 Corinthians 5:10b).

God has given each of us a body to use as a vehicle through which we might glorify Him. So, Paul writes: “For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:20, NASB95).

So, we will all “receive” [κομίζω, *to get something back, to recover*⁷] what we have coming to us for what we have “done in the body,” either good or evil.

Notice it: *everything* we do, *every* sacrifice we make, *every* act of kindness we perform because we love Jesus – *will ALL come back to us*.

Peter once asked Jesus, “See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?”²⁸ Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world [the παλιγγενεσία, *in the regeneration*], when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life” (Matthew 19:27-29).

And absolutely *everything* we do out of love for Jesus is significant and will be remembered forever.

Our Lord said in **Matthew 10:42**: “Whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”

This evaluation of believers is not “*en masse*, or in classes, but one by one, in accordance with individual merit.”⁸

⁷ Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 557.

⁸ Plummer, A., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (ICC; Edinburgh, 1915), p.157.

† And that evaluation, whether we receive or lose rewards, is directly related to whether or not we've advanced to spiritual adulthood.

Mature believers care very much about pleasing Him; immature believers, not so much. Let's look at **1 Corinthians 3** again and read a bit more of it:

But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ²I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, ³for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? ⁴For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human?" (**1 Corinthians 3:1-4**).

And then a few verses later, he talks about building upon the foundation of our salvation.

Mature believers build with precious things. Immature believers build with flammable junk.

¹⁰According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire" (**1 Corinthians 3:10-15**).

The way we build upon the foundation of our salvation will determine whether we're rewarded or suffer loss.

But notice: either way, we "will be saved, but only as through fire.

✠ In **2 Thessalonians 1:11-12**, Paul writes that God might make us “worthy of his calling ... ¹² so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Essentially, the degree to which we glorify Christ now is the degree to which we will be glorified in the Omega Ages.

✠ This is a reference to the uniform of Glory which will be given to believers at the Bema Seat evaluation in Heaven.

Jesus said to the Apostle John: “The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels” (**Rev. 3:5**).

When Jesus says we “will be clothed ... in white garments,” He’s talking about the uniform of Glory which is one of the rewards which will be given to believers in that day.

✠ Those uniforms will be of *varying degrees of glory, varying degrees of brightness*.

1 Corinthians 15:39-42: “For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. ⁴⁰ There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. ⁴¹ There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. ⁴² So is it with the resurrection of the dead.”

✠ And so, “the teaching about the judgment seat before which all believers must come reminds us that *we have been saved, not for a life of aimlessness or indifference, but to live as to the Lord.*”

Just a few verses after telling us that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, Paul reminds us that Jesus “died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised” (**2 Corinthians 5:10, 15**).

True spirituality, as we're going to see, is never so pie-in-the-sky super-spiritual that it forgets the responsibility we have to actually serve the Lord *in the present age*.

That may have been the thinking of some in Corinth.⁹ If so, Paul is reminding them that so long as they are in this body it should be their aim to please the Lord.

Dr. Barnett puts it perfectly: “The sure prospect of the judgment seat reminds ... all believers ... that while they are righteous in Christ by faith alone, the faith that justifies is to be expressed by love and obedience (**Galatians 5:6; Romans 1:5**), and by pleasing the Lord (**2 Cor. 5:9**).”¹⁰

Now, Jesus is teaching us something about the Spiritual Life, our New Life in Christ – the Resurrected Life: it requires a continual dying; it is a lifelong process of dying.

And so, He says in another place, “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple” (**Luke 14:27**). Death, then, in Jesus’ estimation, becomes THE necessary prerequisite to really living and reproducing our life.

But all that we do for the Lord, all that we’ve sacrificed for Him, will come back to us in Technicolor!

In **2 John 8**, the Beloved Apostle wrote, “Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.”¹¹

I’m taking the time to study these things carefully because I want all of us to receive a “full reward.”

⁹ Cf., Barnett, Paul, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), pp. 274–77, italics mine.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, pp. 274–77.

¹¹ I don’t like the ESV’s translation “win” here. **Ἀπολαμβάνω** simply means “to obtain something from a source, to receive.” Each believer will receive reward (if they have any coming to them) from the “source” of God Himself.