

- 1  **"If I Be Lifted Up"**  
John 12:20-33 NLT
- 2  **OPENING: Two engineers, one from Iowa State University and the other from University of Illinois, were out in a yard standing by a flagpole, vigorously discussing something. A student from Western Illinois University happened by and asked what they were arguing about. "Oh," replied the student from I.S.U. graduate, "we were discussing how best to determine the height of this flagpole and what equation to use."**
- 3  **"That's easy enough," declared the Western Illinois student, and he took the pole out of the ground, laid it down on the grass, pulled out his tape measure and declared: "It's 10' 6" long."**
- 4  **As the graduate from Western Illinois walked away, the engineer from I.S.U. turned to the one from Illinois and declared: "Isn't that just like a guy from Western Illinois. You ask him for height and he gives you length."**
- 5  **Why do I tell that story? We live in a world where heavenly things can confuse our earthly minds.**
- 6  **Think of all the seemingly contradictory things in the Bible?**
- We see unseen things (2 Cor. 4:18)
  - We conquer by yielding (Rom. 6:16-18)
  - We find rest under a yoke (Mt. 11:28-30)
  - We reign by serving (Mark 10:42-44)
  - We are made great by becoming little (Luke 9:48)
  - We are exalted by being humble (Mt. 23:12)
- 7
- We become wise by being fools for Christ's sake (1 Cor. 1:20, 21)
  - We are made free by becoming His servants (Rom. 6:10)
  - We grow strong by being weak (2 Cor. 12:10)
  - We triumph by defeat (2 Cor. 12:7-9)
  - We find victory by glorying in our weaknesses (2 Cor. 12:5)
- 8  **But perhaps most difficult of all for us:  
We live by dying (John 12:24,25; 2 Cor. 4:10,11)**
- 9  **I. John 12:23-25 is a hard saying.**
- 10  **"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, 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. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."**
- 11  **This was Jesus' teaching and example.**
- Speaking of his own death he said, "if I be lifted up, I'll draw all people to myself." John 12:32
- 12  **Jesus is basically telling His disciples that to live they need to die.**
- That's not a comfortable teaching, is it?
  - Because most of us are not in a big hurry to die.
- 13  **As much as our hymns may talk about going home to heaven.**
- "When the roll is called up yonder..,"
  - "When we all get to heaven," etc.
  - When the time comes to cross the great divide, even the most spiritual tend not to be

- too homesick for heaven.
- We've grown accustomed to this world.
    - We've trained ourselves to defend our lives, our loved ones, our possessions.
    - We've trained ourselves to survive.
- 14  **When the Apollo project was beginning, there was an argument between the engineers and scientists over how to make the best use of the space on board the rocket.**
- The scientists wanted as much space as possible for lab work, the engineers wanted it for back up systems in case something failed.
  - They were at a stalemate until they asked the astronauts. What would you prefer - lab space, or back up units?
  - What do you think they opted for? You guessed it - survival.
- 15  **II. And yet, Jesus tells us our very usefulness - our fruitfulness for God - is tied to our willingness to surrender our lives - even to die for Him.**
- 16  **One Commentator noted that there are 6 instances where Jesus mentions BEARING FRUIT as a Christian ...**
- - and 5 of those are tied to the cross or dying.
  - In Short - it is in dying... not in doing... that we bear fruit for God.
  - OR, to put it another way: Placed in the position of obeying God when it might really cost you, WHAT WILL YOU CHOOSE?
- 17  **III. In the economy of God, death comes before resurrection.**
- 18  **Certain seeds must die in our lives.**
- 19  **1. The Seed of your Priorities.**
- 20  **When I talk to people about following Christ, I tell them part of what they need to do to be saved is to "confess that Jesus is Lord."**
- I explain to them that this is more than saying the "right words."
  - It means giving Jesus complete LORDSHIP, or ownership of their lives.
  - I point to a calendar. Every day of the week belongs to God. Lordship means my work time and my free time belongs to God.
  - It is no longer my own.
- 21  **Luke 9:59-62 He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."**
- 22  **Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."**
- 23  **2. The Seed of your Possessions.**
- 24  **One way to understand Lordship is to look at your wallet.**
- Take a look - there's not much money in mine, but what there is must belong to God.
  - My credit cards belong to Him.
  - Here's pictures of wife and children. They belong to Him.
  - My cars, my house, etc. - they all must be His if He is to be Lord of my life.
- 25  **3. The Seed of your Personality**
- 26  **Philippians 2:5-8 "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant,**

**being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!"**

- 27  **Think about it. How did Jesus answer Satan's temptation to turn stones into bread?**
- Jesus told him, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.
  - Jesus basically told him: "I don't have to survive. I'm willing to die" to put God first.
- 28  **When Jesus was in garden before crucifixion he prayed: "If it be possible, take this cup from me yet, not as I will, but Your will be done."**
- He was willing to die to fulfill His purpose.
  - And because He was willing to die, He gave us life through His death and resurrection.
- 29  **Here's the truth - that which appears to be death to us is often that which gives life.**
- In his book, "Written in Blood," Robert Coleman tells the story of a little boy whose sister needed a blood transfusion.
  - The doctor explained that she had the same disease the boy had recovered from 2 years earlier.
  - Her only chance for recovery was a transfusion from someone who had previously conquered the disease.
  - Since the two children had the same rare blood type, the boy was the ideal donor.
- 30  **"Would you give your blood to Mary?" the doctor asked.**
- Johnny hesitated. His lower lip started to tremble. Then he smiled and said, "Sure, for my sister."
  - Soon the two children were wheeled into the hospital room, Mary, the sister, pale and thin; Johnny, robust and healthy.
  - Neither spoke, but when their eyes met, Johnny grinned.
  - As the nurse inserted the needle into his arm, Johnny's smile faded. He watched the blood flow through the tube.
  - With the ordeal almost over, his voice, slightly shaky, broke the silence, "Doctor, when do I die?"
  - That which appears to be death to us often brings life!
  - What seeds must die in your life in order that their be new life?
- 31  **(\* My thanks and acknowledgement to Jeff Strite for content used in this sermon.)**