

**The Grain of Wheat and Jesus' "Hour"
(5th Sunday of Lent, Year B)**

Jeremiah 31:31-34—The Prophecy of the New Covenant

1. "New Covenant": sacred family bond between God and his people (31:31)
2. New vs. Old: "not like" the covenant made at Mount Sinai (31:32)
3. New Law: written in "their hearts" (31:33), vs. written on tablets (cf. Exod 31:18)

Psalms 51—Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God

1. Prayer for Mercy: "Have mercy on me, o God..." (v. 1)
2. Prayer for a Clean Heart: "a clean heart" = "a new and right spirit" (v. 10)
3. Prayer for Joy: "Restore to me the joy of your salvation" (v. 12)

Hebrews 5:7-9—The Prayers and Obedience of Jesus

1. Prayer: "Jesus offered up *prayers* and supplications with *loud cries* and *tears*" (v. 7)
2. Obedience: "he learned obedience through what he suffered" (v. 8)

John 12:20-33—The "Hour" of Jesus Has Come

1. The Passover: went up to worship at "the feast" (12:20)
2. Conversion of the Greeks: "some Greeks" come seeking Jesus (12:21-22)
 - a. Philip: they go to the apostle with the Greek name (Greek *Philippos*)!
 - b. Andrew: Philip goes to "Andrew" (Greek *Andreas*) another Greek name!
 - c. "Sir, we wish to see Jesus"
3. Jesus Response (12:23)
 - a. "the Hour": "the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified"
 - b. Parable of the Seed: unless "a grain of wheat" "dies" it does not bear "fruit"
 - c. Explanation: "He who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."
4. The "Hour" of Jesus (12:27-33)
 - a. The "Hour" = the hour of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection (cf. John 13:1)
 - b. Jesus' Prayer: not "Father, save me from this hour" (12:27)
 - c. The Father Speaks: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again" (12:28)
 - d. Exorcism: now is "the ruler of this world" (=Satan) to be "cast out" (12:31)
 - e. "I, when I am *lifted up* from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (12:32)
 - f. Crucifixion: Jesus is speaking of his *death* (12:33)

The Living Tradition

St. Irenaeus: And just as a cutting from the vine planted in the ground fructifies in its season, or as *a corn of wheat falling into the earth* and becoming decomposed, rises with manifold increase by the Spirit of God, who contains all things, and then, through the wisdom of God, serves for the use of men, and having received the Word of God, *becomes the Eucharist*, which is the body and blood of Christ; *so also our bodies*, being nourished by it, and deposited in the earth, and suffering decomposition there, *shall rise*

at their appointed time, the Word of God granting them resurrection to the glory of God... (Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 5.2.3.; trans. ANF)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (5th Sunday in Lent, Year B)

1. Why does Jesus begin to speak about his “hour” having finally come once “the Greeks” start looking for him? In the Gospel of John, what is Jesus’ “hour”?

2. According to the prophet Jeremiah, what exactly is “new” about the “new covenant”? How is it different from the Old Covenant?

3 Why does Jesus use the imagery of a “grain of wheat” “dying” to describe his passion, death, and resurrection? What connection is there to the wheat of the Eucharist?

For Further Study

1. Joel C. Elowsky, *John* (2 vols.; Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament IVa-b; Downers Grove: IVP, 2006), 57-71.