

## Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> April: A Grain of Wheat

Jesus grew up in rural Nazareth, surrounded by peasant farmers. As a Carpenter himself he would have spent many hours fashioning yoke for oxen, or handles for ploughs and scythes. He understood well the rhythm of the agricultural year. At the *right* time... a farmer must take some of his precious grain and sew it into his field... the grain that might have fed his family. Each grain must die, break open, break down – lose itself in order for the new shoot to emerge... the leaves and finally a new ear of wheat or barley and many more seeds. This is the simple stark metaphor Jesus uses in our reading from John's gospel today.

### Read John 12:20-36

What triggered this profound conversation “unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains a single seed...But if it dies it produces many seeds.” It was Jesus strange response when Andrew and Philip tell him that there are some Greeks, foreigners in search of the Jewish God – also staying in Jerusalem this festival time – who want to see Him. It is as if this confirms for him that YES – his hour is now come.

All through John's gospel, we find him referring to ‘the hour’. At the Wedding in Cana Jesus tells his mother ‘My hour is not yet come’. Later in chapter 7, when he is again in Jerusalem for a festival, we read ‘No one arrested him for his hour had not yet come’.... But this time – as the Greeks come to see him – he is suddenly aware that the hour is at hand when a much broader harvest will be gathered.

‘When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw ALL men to myself’....

This Jewish Messiah, this Carpenter from Nazareth is called to be a light to the nations – to call all men to walk by his light, to guide our feet into the Way of Peace.

But first... the sacrifice must be made... the seed must fall to the ground and die. Although Jesus fulfilled this in a unique way – facing the power of sin and death alone on the cross – he pioneered a way of living and self-giving which his *servants*; his *followers* were called to share. Christians are called to take up our cross and follow.

That could have been the end of the story.... The seed fell to the ground and died..... but we know that in the two thousand years since Jesus walked this earth... thousands and millions have found this way of living and self-giving to bring them life in all its fullness and a joy and peace which sustains them through life and death.

This sacrificial living and sacrificial giving is what we are seeing daily in our News Reports as many medics lose their own lives treating those who are suffering with coronavirus. In smaller ways, we see ordinary people all round the country taking time to sew seeds of love and reassurance into a soil of fear and isolation.... Walking in the light of Jesus.

As John writes in a later letter to the new believers: “This is how we know we are in him. Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.”