

*I greet you this day with the joy of Jesus. I also bring you greetings on behalf of the 180 plus congregations and more than 80,000 members of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod where Bishop Yehiel Curry serves as our Episcopal Leader.*

John 12:27 ***“Now my soul is deeply troubled. Should I pray, ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But this is the very reason I came!”***<sup>NLT</sup>

### **Introduction – What’s the Reason?**

Permit me to introduce to some and present to others a method called **appreciative inquiry**. Appreciative inquiry is a model that seeks to engage stakeholders in self-determined change. This model is based on the premise that questions we ask will focus our attention in a particular direction to address organizational and community challenges. In practicing the technique of appreciative inquiry, **asking the right question** is often more important than coming up with the **correct answer**.

Keeping this technique in mind, I have a for us. So often we are asked the question, what are you willing to **die** for? This is a great question but its **rhetorical** and **hypothetical** in nature. It’s a question asked to make a point rather than to get an answer? **But today, I want to ask you an even more important question; a question that you can answer, “What are you willing to live for?”**

John 12 verse 27 is one of few times that Jesus focuses on himself so it’s worth paying some attention to. Jesus expresses His uncertainty. Jesus ponders the purpose and meaning of His life. **Jesus questions His future. Jesu is asking, “Why am I doing this?” What am I reason I am going to die?**

In this text, Jesus’ last dialog in John’s Gospel, Jesus focuses on the meaning of His death - **which means it also focuses on meaning of His life**. Sometimes we can become so obsessed with Jesus’ death that we lose sight of Jesus’ life. In doing this hen we do this; we risk Jesus becoming the **object** of worship rather than the **subject** of worship.

Here Jesus is questioning His purpose. Jesus is inquiring of God the meaning for his life.

Let's listen in on Jesus' exchange within John 12:27 paraphrased in The Message.

*“Right now, I am shaken. And what am I going to say? ‘Father, get me out of this’? No, this is why I came in the first place. I’ll say, ‘Father, put your glory on display...let your name be glorified’*

Being both fully human and fully divine, the Word made flesh, Jesus asks and answers His own question. What's the reason for my death- what's the reason for my life? **This is the reason.** But like us, Jesus followers need reassuring. For Jesus, this is not a moment of revelation but a moment of remembering His purpose.

By now lectionary preachers ought to have an appreciation that for the third time since Ash Wednesday, this **elemental God** of all creation steps out of eternity into history and speaks to Jesus and to us through nature. In response to Jesus' uncertainty, God thunders reassurance to Jesus and responds, *“I have glorified it, and I’ll glorify it again.” Aren’t you glad that God still speaks! Are you glad that God is still speaking to you and me?*

### Seeking Significance in Life

Lent is about begin re-assured and seeking an answer to the question, *“What’s the reason I’m here?” What’s my God-given purpose?* Seeking meaning is how we survive and our primary evolutionary business. As both **meaning-seekers** and **meaning-makers** we discover the purposes of our lives and make sense of life experiences. To seek meaning and experience those aha moments of life, there is a need for us to be attentive, open, and hospitable to what God is up to.

God reminds Jesus of the significance of His days. God gives Jesus' **death** and **equally** important His life meaning. This same God is available to us. To help us understand the significance of **our days** as well.

Frederic and Marian Brussat write,

**EACH DAY THE CHALLENGE IS TO DECIPHER THE LESSONS IN AN ENCOUNTER ON THE STREET CORNER, AND ARTICLE READ DURING LUNCH, A PROBLEM AT WORK, THE CRITICISM OF A PEER OR THE SILENCE BEFORE THE DAWN-WE WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

Jungian psychologist writes, Alice Howell writes,

**“WE CAN ONLY SEE HALF OF ANYTHING THE OTHER HALF IS THE MEANING WE GIVE TO WHAT WE SEE.”**

### **Living a Life That Counts**

During this pandemic period, I believe people still want their life to count for something. People want their life to have significance. People want to live a life that counts. Now more than ever people want to be a force for good in the world.

Jesus reminds his followers of his purpose when he says, *“When I am lifted up, I will draw everyone to myself.”* The spiritual or universal truth of this text is found in the **paradox of the cross**. Sacrificing himself for humanity on the cross is the way Jesus lived- not only the way Jesus died. Jesus lived and died sacrificially. In his death we find life our life.

In 1969, Black Panther Party leader Fred Hampton said,

**“I’M GOING TO DIE FOR THE PEOPLE BECAUSE I AM GOING TO LIVE FOR THE PEOPLE”  
BECAUSE JESUS HAS LIVED FOR THE PEOPLE HE NOW MUST DIE FOR THE PEOPLE.”**

Chances are you and I won’t die like Jesus, but we can live like Jesus. Jesus demonstrates to us that **unconditional, sacrificial** love is the fuel that **propels** us out of the orbit of self-centeredness, **overcomes** the gravitational pull of self-interest and **re-aligns** the trajectory of our lives.

Through Jesus personal sacrifice, God keeps God’s covenant promise and writes the message of love on His heart with a finger of love. Jeremiah says, *“I will put my law within them—write it on their hearts! —and be their God. And they will be my people...They’ll know me firsthand...I’ll wipe the slate clean for each of them. I’ll forget they ever sinned!”*

### Dums, dums, M&Ms and Tootsie Pops

There are 3 ways to look at the world's religions. The *dum-dum*, the *plain M&M* and the *Tootsie Pop*. The *dum-dum* teaches us that each world religions is distinct and has a flavor all its own. The *M&M* teaches us that despite outward appearances all religions are exactly the same. The *tootsie pop* teaches us that surface differences matter but if you investigate deeply enough you will find they all share the same heart.

*Without God* at the heart, none of them work!

*God bless you and keep you is our prayer!*