

We Wish to See Jesus

Lent 4: John 12:20-33
King of Glory Lutheran Church
Pr Ruth Ann Loughry
March 20-21, 2021

Who among us doesn't want to see Jesus? We all want an encounter with Jesus! It helps to look back to interpret the present. Then we can rest in God as we look into the future.

John 12:20-33 ²⁰Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." ²²Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

²⁷"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." ²⁹The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." ³⁰Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." ³³He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

The Greeks came and said to Philip, "We wish to see Jesus." Haven't we all at some point or another wanted to see someone close up? People stand in lines all night long to see their favorite music star or football player or politician. Crowds surround the roads British royals or Hollywood stars travel to simply get a glimpse! How many movies or novels are made up of people making a lifetime trek to see a holy man or woman?

Good news – Jesus' popularity is rising. These Greeks were either Greek speaking Jews or Greeks who had converted to Judaism. They had heard about Jesus and wanted to meet with him.

What one of us has not wanted to meet or see someone famous or a person we truly admire?

Hence Andrew and Philip deliver the news to Jesus that he has some admirers who want to see him. What Jesus does next, is what Henri Nouwen calls, answering from above. Often when Jesus is asked an earthly question, He answers from a heavenly perspective. It's frankly confusing and often maddening to people who are trying to understand Him.

“Jesus, these men want to see you!”

“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”

“Come again, Jesus? Excuse me?” (All the while thinking, they only want to see you, not a farming lesson.)

What Jesus is saying in coded language is, “If they really want to see me, they’ll see the true nature of who I am when I’m dying on the cross.”

For it is in Jesus’ life, death, and His resurrection and ascension, that those first disciples and we too, see the totality of this one called Jesus.

It’s exciting and perhaps frightening to hear Jesus yell into the tomb, “Lazarus, come out!” For then we smell the remaining stench of a body’s decay while peering into a darkened cave. With heads turned, out of the corner of our eye comes a dead man walking. What?!

It’s gratifying to watch all those women, men and children feasting on fish and bread. They didn’t know where their next meal was coming from. The soft grass so green is underfoot. Laughter rings through the air. Even Jesus looks delighted that people are satisfied.

But the mud in his eyes? That was just plain strange. Remember? Jesus stooped over and spat in the mud. Making a mixture, Jesus then put it on the blind man’s eyes. After washing it off his face in the pool of Siloam, the man could see!

This is who Jesus is! We want to see Him, this is who Jesus is! We’ve known Him. We’ve walked and laughed with Him. We’ve been amazed at His powers, and presence and patience. This is who Jesus is!

No. No that’s not all. ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.’ (Jn 12:23-24)

You mean we have to see that too? Yes. We do.

Then they crucified Him. The sign reads, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” The soldiers are rolling their dice for His clothes. Look, there are the three Mary’s and John. They’re distraught. It’s so hard to listen to His breathing. Oh – they are giving Him some wine. What did He say? “It is finished.” It is finished! Jesus!!

A wise woman once said, “A life of faith recalls the past, resides in the present and rests in the future.” (<https://www.workingpreacher.org/dear-working-preacher/a-vision-check-up> by Karoline Lewis) Do you see?

We cannot only focus on a small area of God in our lives. We have to maneuver the steering wheel while we look in the rearview mirror and at the open highway before us. If what we observe in the rearview mirror tells of God’s goodness and grace, presence and protection, then we can trust God is sitting in the passenger seat. If God is in the passenger seat, then won’t God be on the ride 25 miles ahead when there is an unexpected bump in the road? Take a look!

A life of faith recalls the past, resides in the present and rests in the future.

When those courageous or audacious Greeks asked if they could see the Holy One, they didn’t have the same lens as the disciples. They had heard but not seen. The disciples – even if they didn’t fully comprehend the present moment had already seen, heard, touched, smelled and tasted a Jesus life.

Those Greeks didn’t want to see Jesus. They wanted to experience Him. If we only look, we miss what God wants us to know.

Holy Week is coming. There is plenty to watch, hear, touch, smell and taste. Don’t miss a single day. Enter the whole story with your whole being: body, mind and spirit. Jesus did. In fact He entered the whole week for our sakes. May we also. Amen.