

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.

²⁷Now 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.

John 12:20-33, 2015

Isn't it interesting that Greeks would have come to Jerusalem and requested to see Jesus.

It is a long journey, and for what purpose do they come?

We don't know anything about them except they came to Jerusalem for the Passover and went to the Temple to worship.

That at least gives us an indication that they likely were Hellenists, or converts to the Jewish faith.

They come to Philip, who Jesus called to follow Him back in the first chapter of John's gospel, requesting to see Jesus.

He goes to Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, and the first of the disciples according to John.

Together they go to Jesus to let him know these Greeks want to see him.

One of the other interesting things about this story is we never hear about the Greeks again. We aren't told if Jesus agrees to see them.

I believe it is safe to say, however that they will see Jesus while they are in Jerusalem, only it won't be in the way they anticipated.

Lets put this story in its context.

Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead and word of that got around pretty quickly, including to the Pharisees.

The Pharisees then gave the order that anyone who saw Jesus was to tell them so they could arrest him.

This is followed by Jesus' anointing by Mary with expensive perfume.

While Jesus was with Lazarus and his sisters a great crowd gathered in Bethany because they wanted not only to see Jesus,
but Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

Jesus then makes His royal entry into Jerusalem, hailed King of Israel, everyone knows He has come,

And the Pharisees say to one another,
"You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!"

And the Greeks show up requesting to see Jesus.

In these last days of Jesus' life these Greeks will witness Jesus being tried, beaten and crucified.

They will not see the Glorification of the Son of Man in the way they expect.

What they will see is Jesus lifted, but it will be up on His cross.

This is what you can expect to see when you go looking for Jesus especially during this season of Lent.

This is a time of reflection and self-examination, repentance, devotion and discipline.

This is a time when you see on the horizon the dark days of Holy Week, suffering and death that comes before the celebration of the resurrection at Easter.

I chose the Gospel Acclamation we sang today, “Open our eyes Lord” because it speaks to a desire that has persisted throughout the centuries of Christian faith,

the desire to see Jesus.

But, do you really?

What kind of Jesus do you want to see?

Do you want to see the glorified Jesus, resurrected, alive, with that gold halo depicted in so many icons?

Do you want to see the Jesus holding a lamb, or a child on his lap?

These are wonderful pictures of Jesus, and pictures that are helpful in understanding something about His great love.

But the rest of our gospel lesson helps develop a picture of Jesus we need to see as well.

The hour has come for Jesus' glorification and Jesus looks beyond the moment to the next couple of days and describes his glorification.

“...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.”

²⁷Now 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.

“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

John is clear about the kind of Jesus the Greeks, His disciples, and we see if we are willing to really look.

He must die and be buried.

The hour Jesus speaks of, the glory he prays for, the fulfillment of his mission and the destiny He anticipates revolves around the cross;

His obedient embrace of sacrificial love to the point of death for those Greeks, for you, for me.

Jesus performed many miracles including the raising of Lazarus. But we read in the story about Lazarus that only some of the people believed even after witnessing that miracle.

So what does it take?

The message for us here is that faith is not comfortable, or simply satisfying our own spiritual desires

Faith gets uncomfortable as you are drawn into the Christ's love and service and sacrifice on behalf of those who are in need;

in need of food, shelter, clothing and all those other physical needs, yes,
but also in need of love, mercy and forgiveness.

This was His life and you are called to that same life.

Each person who gathers here for worship, or who may come here for some other reason at any time wishes to see Jesus,

desires an encounter with the living Christ.

Is that what they experience when they come here?

Of course, when we gather and the lessons are read you get a glimpse of Jesus.

When you sing a song like our gospel acclamation, and all the other songs we sing you get a glimpse of Jesus.

When you receive the bread and wine of Holy Communion you get a glimpse of Jesus.

When someone you don't know extends a hand to share the peace of Christ you get a glimpse of Jesus,

and in sharing that peace you likewise offer a glimpse of Jesus.

And that is an important part of your calling,
to offer another a glimpse of Jesus as you offer His
and your love, forgiveness and mercy to others.

Like those Greeks who came to see Jesus in our gospel lesson, there are many in this world today who have not seen Jesus and may have that desire.

Questions we must always ask are,
“Have we prepared a place where they can come and see Jesus?”

“Is this a place where non-Christians can be engaged in the transformational process that leads to belief in Jesus Christ
and faith active in service to our community and the world
offering love, mercy and forgiveness?”

There are those who say that is the whole purpose for the church, and they will not accept any transfers of Christians into membership, only non-Christians,

the Nones, those who claim no religious affiliation,
and those who claim to be spiritual but not religious.

Belief comes from looking in another direction.

In verse 32 Jesus says, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

Lifted up He was.

That is the place you need to look at and where we all need to point;

Where Jesus is lifted up.

Beginning next Sunday, Palm Sunday, you will hear the most of the story of His being lifted up,

first as king and you will be here with your palm fronds celebrating the glory of Jesus the king who enters the Holy City.

But because you know that resurrection does not come without death,

you will also be here on Maundy Thursday to recall the story of the last Passover meal Jesus shared with his disciples, and Judas’ betrayal.

You will be here on Good Friday again to see the death Jesus suffered for you when He was lifted up on the cross.

And then you will be prepared to come again to see Jesus lifted up from death to life on Easter morning,

The lifting up that gives you life forever and ever.

Amen