

Sermon for Lent 5B  
Sunday, March 17, 2024  
“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

Text: John 12:20-33; Jeremiah 31:31-34

I speak to you in the name of the one true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” That was the request made by a group of Greeks attending the Passover festival in Jerusalem that year. They wished to see Jesus. We are not told in the Gospel passage who these Greeks were, but they were probably Greek-speaking Jews who had traveled from far away. We aren’t even given an indication as to *why* they wanted to see Jesus. All we know is that they were in Jerusalem at the Passover festival and they were curious. Perhaps going to the Passover festival was something like going to New Orleans for Mardi Gras. Perhaps they thought that Jesus was the latest attraction. They had heard about this Jesus who was doing really extraordinary things. Jesus had created quite a stir when he raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus created such a stir that the Jewish authorities began a plot to kill both Jesus and Lazarus. What were they expecting if they did, in fact, find Jesus. We’re not told any of that. We don’t know if they ever found him. All we know is that some Greeks went looking for Jesus, and they went to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and inquired. Why Philip? Perhaps it was because he had a Greek name and came from a town with a mixed population of Jews and Greeks. Perhaps they did not speak Aramaic, so they approached someone who they thought could translate once they found Jesus. Philip went to Andrew and the two of them relayed the message to Jesus, who starts talking that his hour had finally come. No further mention of the Greeks, or if they found Jesus, or what they wanted.

“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Do you wish to see Jesus? Ironically, beginning today, Jesus seems hidden from us. Today, being Passion Sunday, you will notice that all of the crosses, statues, figurines, and icons inside the church have been covered. In the church’s lectionary prior to the 1979 BCP and in the new Revised Common Lectionary, which we use now, the Gospel reading for the Fifth Sunday in Lent was taken from the 8<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. In that story the Jewish authorities challenged the authority of things he was saying about God. They accused Jesus of being a Samaritan and of having a demon. The more Jesus talked the angrier they became. Finally, accused him of dishonoring the name of the beloved patriarch Abraham and became so angry that they picked up rocks to stone him. At that point, the scripture says that Jesus hid himself. That’s why it was the Church’s tradition to wait until this Sunday to cover everything, to symbolize visually Jesus hiding himself.

Starting today, the focus in Lent shifts our attention from our sinfulness and dependance on God and directs it toward Christ’s Passion and Crucifixion. We are preparing for his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, which we will celebrate next Sunday and hard journey toward Golgotha that we will relive during Holy Week. Jesus’s hour has now come. God glorified Jesus at the Transfiguration and will soon glorify him

again when he will be lifted up, so that all people will see him and be drawn to him. “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

Do you wish to see Jesus? It seems to me when we look all around us and all that’s going on in the world, Jesus seems hidden from us. All of the struggles we see going on, all of the violence, all of the inhumanities and atrocities we see being launched against other humans, all of the pain we face in our own lives, it makes it difficult for us to see Jesus. He seems hidden from us.

Today’s gospel is meant to make us look for Jesus. The symbolism of hiding Jesus today invites us to look for him in the places and circumstances where it seems that he is not there. He said, “Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.” Today’s gospel is meant to help us realize that we have found him and we see him, because Jesus lives in us. Jesus went to the Cross, so that God would be glorified. Jesus went to the Cross to save humanity. Jesus went to the Cross to redeem us when we turned away from God, to reconcile us and bring us back to God. Jeremiah foretold it in his words to the people of Judah at a time of war, occupation, and exile: “Know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.” We are worthy of God’s love and mercy, because Jesus Christ went to the Cross. He was lifted up so that all humanity would be drawn to him, because he is God-made-flesh. That very flesh we take in when we receive him in the Holy Eucharist, when we recall his death—and resurrection. “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.” Jesus appears in us and it is up to us to show everybody that we see him and they can too.

“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Can you see Jesus? Where is Jesus for you today? When day-to-day life seems bleak and the world yearns for a ray of hope, that’s when we have to be ambassadors for Christ, not just telling the world that God is real and will get us through it, but showing that by showing love for our neighbors, respect for each other, and showing charity where it is needed. I’m going to put some pressure on you to help the world see Jesus, because the world is looking for him. We are trying to get a new grab-and-go feeding ministry started, one that will show love and charity in this neighborhood by feeding the hungry. We need to make it happen, and we need to do it now. We need to commit to our young people in this church to teach them how to be ambassadors for Christ and show that God is real and moving in the world. Yesterday, I participated in the Diocesan Youth Vocations Day and I met four young people who are on fire for Jesus. We have much to be hopeful for in our young people, who want to make a difference. We need more lectors, acolytes, and Eucharistic ministers; I need you to step up and show us that you see Jesus by serving in the church. And finally, I want you to be ambassadors for Christ every day and everywhere you go. I know you’re already doing this in countless ways, so I’m encouraging you keep up the good work.

When the people you meet in the places you go say, “We wish to see Jesus,” show them. Be his ambassador. Lift him up, because he lives in you, and help draw others to him as you walk life’s hard journey.

Lift him up, lift him up!  
Still he speaks from eternity.  
And if I, if I be lifted up from this earth,  
I’ll draw all men unto me.

Amen.

Resource

*Feasting on the Word* for Lent 5 (Year B, Volume 2)