

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Palm Sunday / Passion Sunday B
March 24, 2024
John 12:20-43

“We Wish to See Jesus”

Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." (John 12:20-21 ESV)

Dearly Beloved in Christ:

Jesus entered Jerusalem to much pomp, glory, laud, and honor. People lined the road, waving palm branches, shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” (John 12:13). They were cheering their Savior, even if they didn’t know what He would save them from. Among those present were some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover.

But not everyone who saw Jesus that day was happy about it. The Pharisees certainly weren’t. The tension between them and Jesus had grown increasingly hot, and almost boiled over when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus was a threat to them and their power and influence and they determined that He must die.

So it is that some Greeks came to Philip asking, “We wish to see Jesus.” What a request! What a glorious and God-pleasing desire! But which Jesus did those Greeks wish to see? Did they want to see a miracle worker who could heal broken and diseased bodies? Did they want to see the One who could multiply bread and fish to feed thousands of people? Did they want to see the One who had raised Lazarus from the dead? Did they merely want to see a great Teacher? Or did they want to see the One who caused such a commotion when He entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey? What kind of Jesus did they want to see?

And more to the point, what kind of Jesus do you wish to see - the real Jesus, or one of your own imagination, one who resides only in the recesses of your mind? The gentle, peaceful, nice, smiling Jesus we see in so many pictures? A “glory Jesus” who will make your every wish come true and make you healthy, wealthy, and wise? A Jesus who will make your life here on earth a paradise without any kind of trouble? A Jesus who is only a good example or moral teacher? A Jesus who opposes those who oppress you and put them in their place?

Or do you wish to see the Jesus who came to save you from your sins, from death, and from the power of the devil? The Jesus who cleansed the Temple, entered Jerusalem humbly, suffered the agony of the Passion, and shed His precious blood on the cross for your salvation? The Jesus who rose from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity. The Jesus who is present in His house and the Church's liturgy to give you His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation?

You see, it's this latter Jesus, the One who suffered and died for you and your salvation, the Jesus who rose from the dead, and continues to bear fruit through His holy Word and Sacraments that is the real Jesus. And He's the only Jesus you need.

Beloved, if you want to see Jesus, you must see the Lamb of God sacrificed for you on the cross. You must see Him who died for your sins and paid the penalty that you and I have earned and deserve. You must see Him whose blood covers the multitude of your sins and gives to you forgiveness and eternal life. You must see the Jesus who comes to His Church and personally offers you that forgiveness of sins in His Word spoken by His servant and as He feeds you with His own Body and Blood in His Holy Supper.

Nothing less than the death and resurrection of Christ could fully reveal the mind and heart of God toward sinners. Nothing less than the death and resurrection of Jesus could fully show the glory of God. That's why, our Lord says, "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified." And then, just after He said, "Father, glorify your name," a voice came from heaven saying: "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." This glory of God is shown by way of Jesus' horrible death on the cross where He suffered and died for the sins of the world, and then by way of His resurrection where He showed that sin, death, and the devil had been conquered. His glory continues in the adoration by hosts of believers the world over who trust in Jesus as their only Savior. Jesus was glorified by the obedience He rendered to the Father, even unto death on a cross, and by the redemption that He thereby achieved for the fallen world.

Thus, the death and resurrection of our Lord, as it is encapsulated and given to us in the Sacrament glorifies Christ and shows His boundless love for us. The Father loves you such that He sent His Son to die for you and to rise from the grave on the third day so that believing in Him you will not perish but have eternal life. Through His death, Jesus conquered all the evils of this world that would enslave and destroy you. Whoever wants to see Jesus must see Him in terms of His death and resurrection, for only there do we see God's true victory for us; only there do we see the fullness of God's glory for us.

Furthermore, seeing the Savior comes through repentance and faith. Our Lord put it this way, "The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." Here Jesus lays it on the line. If you're happy or satisfied with life in this world, life in a fallen state, separated from God, trusting in your goodness, then you will most certainly lose your life for all eternity in hell. God grant it not be so for you.

On the other hand, “whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” Seeing Jesus our Savior comes through repentance and faith which the Holy Spirit works in us through the Law and the Gospel. As lost sinners whom God has found and made His children, we surrender our whole life to Christ, who alone gives us forgiveness and eternal life. Truly seeing Jesus is to see Him as your Savior from the wretchedness of your sin and its resulting death. When you see Jesus in this way, you also confess that it is God who has worked all of this in you. As Jesus said in our text, “But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” Christ draws us to Himself through His Word and Sacraments, through His means of grace. It is here that the Holy Spirit is given to us, and it is here that the Holy Spirit works faith. In this way, everything about our salvation is by God's grace. In this way, God alone is glorified.

“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Those words are sometimes carved on the inside of the pulpit where only the preacher can see it. It serves as a reminder to the preacher that he must preach nothing but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, so that the hearers may see Jesus. As we enter Holy Week and you see your Savior suffer and die for your sins; as Easter comes and you rejoice at the empty tomb; as you see your Savior in repentance and faith, rest assured that He did this all for you. And with joyful hope, know that even as He is risen from the grave, and lives and reigns for all eternity, so you too shall rise unto life eternal and be with Him forever. God grant us so to seek and see the Jesus who is the only Savior of the world. To God alone be the glory. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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