

SIR, WE WOULD SEE JESUS

Garden of Gethsemane series, part 3

Scripture:

Psalms 119:9-16

⁹How can young people keep their way pure? By guarding it according to your word.

¹⁰With my whole heart I seek you; do not let me stray from your commandments.

¹¹I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you.

¹²Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes.

¹³With my lips I declare all the ordinances of your mouth.

¹⁴I delight in the way of your decrees as much as in all riches.

¹⁵I will meditate on your precepts, and fix my eyes on your ways.

¹⁶I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

John 12:20-26

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.



“SIR, WE WOULD SEE JESUS.”

Perhaps, we would say, “Friend, we would like to see Jesus.” Can you get me an introduction or a dinner with him?

DON'T OVERLOOK THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

Our lesson from John 12 might be overlooked if we were rushing through the last week in the life of Jesus looking for the “action parts.” But if we miss this message, which is the reason FOR the action, it would be like overlooking the diamonds in search of sparkly stones.

GREEKS WITH QUESTIONS

Let's review what happened in our scripture from John 12: Some Greeks asked Philip, who filtered the request through Andrew, if he could lead them to Jesus. Philip introduced the Greeks to Jesus and Jesus

told them that he would die and be raised again as the messiah.

That was Jesus' final public appearance. So far as the public knew, that was the last thing he said to them. Everything else that happened was strictly among Jesus and the disciples, reflected in his prayer life, and debated with the religious and political authorities, who kept poor records. This short lesson leads us to many questions:

- Why would Greeks be in Jerusalem during the time of the Passover festival?
- Jesus was an observant Jew; he was nothing to them. Why did Greeks want to see Jesus?
- Several times Jesus had said it was not the right time to reveal his true intentions. Why now? Why to Greeks, not Jews? Was Jesus claiming to be “King of the Greeks?”
- Why say “my time has come,” when he had been so guarded previously?

- What is the meaning of the parable of the dying kernel of wheat?

This is what makes theology interesting.

- We ask theologically, is there some area of our own lives that has to die in order that our spirit might live?
- What is it that you feel that you must hold onto that prevents you from making a full commitment to being a follower of Jesus?

BETWEEN PALM SUNDAY AND GOOD FRIDAY

Jesus encountered the Greeks after he entered Jerusalem on the back of the donkey. The Greeks knew that a crowd had greeted Jesus with a parade of palms proclaiming him the messiah, in a reception fit for a king.

The word was out that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the grave, and likely that is the reason that the crowd was so anxious to see him. Like others in Jerusalem, the Greeks had heard the Jesus had raised Lazarus from the grave in Bethany. They knew that the Pharisees were saying among themselves, “It looks like the whole world has gone after him.” Perhaps the Greeks also knew that the Pharisees were planning a second death for Lazarus, because “on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.”

NOT JEWS

Here’s one thing we know for sure about the Greeks. They were not Jews. Religious Greeks believed in Zeus, Hera and the Greek Gods, and they were loyal to a different government. Yet their question led to Jesus’ decisive hour. The Greeks found this Jesus very interesting and wanted to see for themselves.

Philip and Andrew were from the city of Bethsaida, where Jews and Greeks intermingled. These Greeks are representatives of the Hellenistic world. For Jesus the Messiah-King, the Son of man, is now to be lifted up on the cross that he may draw all people to himself. Yes, King of the Greeks, too.

Don't miss this:
**The Jews hoped for a messiah.
 Jesus proclaimed that he was the
 messiah, not just for Jews,
 but for Greeks, too.
 No one had ever made such
 a claim before.**

THE ANSWER OF ALL TIME

The Greeks said to Philip, “Sir, we would see Jesus.”

And in response to this small request, Jesus gave them the answer of all time.

John 12:23-27

23. And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified.
24. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
25. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.
26. If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honor him.
27. "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour.' No, for this purpose I have come to this hour.

My purpose is to die, so that I can be raised up.

The scriptures say that the crowd heard confirmation from heaven. Even though Jesus had done many other signs that were not believed, this moment reveals the path ahead, and it interprets the events that had lead up to it.

John 12: 46-47

46. I have come as light into the world, that whosoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.
47. If any one hears my sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.

This moment is a signal. While the world of Jews and Greeks watched, Jesus in agony makes his final decision of obedience unto death, in servanthood and sonship. Such obedience is indeed the glorification of God.

THIS ANSWER WAS JESUS’ FINAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

And that is the end of it: This is Jesus’ final public statement. This encounter ends Jesus’ public ministry. From this point on, his teaching is confined entirely to the inner circle of his disciples. So don’t miss this.

The key to it all is the request of all time, “**Sir, we would see Jesus.**”

That is the task of every preacher who has ever preached in the name of Jesus Christ: To introduce others to the man who said I am not a citizen of one nation, I am a citizen of the world, and I call you to be citizens of that world too.

A LITTLE SIGN FOR OUR PULPIT – “FRIEND, WE WOULD SEE JESUS!”

Yesterday, I had a sign made for this pulpit that I want to install this morning with the challenge that changed the world. It says, “Friend, We Would See Jesus.” The original question was addressed to Philip, and so it would be proper to say, “Sir,” but when Jesus answered the question saying that he was the messiah for everyone, then he gave his answer not to one man, but to everyone. So the sign I have made says, “Friend, we would see Jesus.”

I want every preacher who ever preaches from this pulpit to look down on this little reminder and say to himself or herself, “Oh yeah, that’s why the people are here.” They have come to be introduced to something about Jesus, or something in culture that points to Jesus, or something in art that reminds them of Jesus, or something in music that sings to Jesus.

You will be in on this little secret. You know that in this pulpit is a job description. There are many ways to do it. We will be open and welcoming knowing that the book the *Song of Solomon* and the book of *Ruth* don’t even mention the word God, and yet we know they are about God. So don’t be legalists. Just know that the minister or layman is looking down at this little reminder that we are installing today, and confronting the most difficult task in a preacher’s life. That is to reveal that part of faith inside himself or herself that points in the direction of the Christ. We know it’s there. People don’t go into ministry based upon a lie; and you can’t build your church and your career on uncertainty and fear. You can only build on hope and the love that God has given you.

FRIEND, WE WOULD SEE JESUS!

At this point in the sermon, Dr. Cushman Invited Sidne Goodwin forward to install the sign on the pulpit. Dr. Cushman placed his fingerprint on the sign. Then he invited members of the clergy who were present - Rev. Kate Clayton, Dr. Peter Maier, Rev. Helen MacKenzie, Rev. Rit Anderson, Dr. Ted Crouch - to come forward and put their fingerprint on the sign. This was followed by placement of fingerprints of the Director of Music, Barbara McElroy; the Accompanist, Althea Wright; Sidne Goodwin; the Chair of the Worship and Arts Committee, Session representative, Delores Dewhurst; Julie Marquette; a

member of that committee, Jackie Spahr; Moderator of Deacons, Nancy Mason; and a first-time visitor, Pon Xayasaeng.

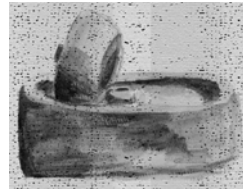
THE SMALL MOMENT THAT BECAME THE BIG MOMENT

This is the small moment that became a big moment, and it led to another small moment following the last supper when Jesus went to the garden of Gethsemane to reaffirm with the God who heard his prayers, that this path was indeed the road ahead.

OLIVE PRESS

Look around at the sanctuary. We have added an olive press to this reminder of the Garden of Gethsemane.

Ancient Olive Press



There is a sketch on your bulletin of an ancient stone olive press. Mentally, you need to place a large log in the center of the round stone, so that you can roll it over the olives and crush

them into olive oil.

In ancient times, September was not only time to prepare for the New Year, but it was also time for harvesting olives. The olive crush could last through November. Near the orchards there was usually an olive press.

OIL WAS EXTRACTED IN SEVERAL BASIC STEPS

1. The farmer would grab the branches of the olive tree, and tap the branches with a stick. They would then pick up the fallen olives, being careful not to bruise them. Each olive is filled with oil, in fact over half of its weight is pure oil.
2. Next the pits are removed and the olives are gently placed into the large basin, and the pressing begins by rolling the large millstone. There was a large wooden stick placed through the center of the stone, to help roll it in a circle over the olives. The oil would flow into a container and the crushed pulp into a basket. This first pressing was the purest oil and was used mainly for lamps, cosmetics and holy anointing.
3. The second pressing was for the crushed pulp.

Olive oil is what we remember from one our favorite scriptures: *“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.” -- Psalm 23:5*

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." -- Matthew 25:1-5

The metaphor of the olive press also reminds us that there was great suffering that began in Gethsemane and ended on Calvary. The process of extracting oil from olives begins with the picking and then bruising and crushing of the fruit. The crushed and broken fruit is then collected into baskets which are stacked one upon the other. They are then placed under the press where tremendous pressure is applied to them. This process slowly crushes the oil from the fruit. The pressure that is applied is firm and fierce, steadily increasing over time until the red stained oil contained therein is extracted from the once unblemished fruit.

OUR CHALLENGE TO SEE JESUS

But the challenge to see and to hear Jesus is not addressed to the preacher, but to the disciples. That's you.

"Friend, I would see Jesus." The request may come unexpectedly to you from:

- A person in a hospital who is frightened.
- A young person looking for direction in life.
- A thief like Jean Val Jean.
- A homeless beggar.
- A person experiencing a divorce, the loss of a loved one, a personal tragedy.

The sign in our pulpit is not just for preachers. We placed it here for our preachers to see, but it may be for them least of all. The sign in our pulpit is for you.

Remember the theology we started with? The last two were for all of us:

- We ask, theologically, is there an area of our own lives that has to die in order that our spirit might live?
- What is there that you feel you must hold onto that prevents you from making a full commitment to being a follower of Jesus?

Do you remember when Jack MacLean came up to the front of the church a couple of weeks ago, and pretended to sit down by a person dressed in a shabby tee-shirt and jeans, and who didn't look like he belonged?

It was so that we could feel that Jack did as Jesus would have done.

***You may be as close to "holy"
as someone ever gets.***

Remember what we did today. Come up and take a peek sometime just to be sure that the message is still there.

This may be the preacher's job description, but I am not going to let anyone here off the hook: **If the preacher doesn't live up to it, in your humble estimation, then the job is yours, not the preacher's.**

Say it with me, **"Friend, we would see Jesus."**

And as long as we continue to answer with hope, then our church will survive.

Let this be a pulpit where the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the blessing of the Holy Spirit is proclaimed for all who come with an open mind to hear.



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