

Sermon for Lent 5B
Sunday, March 18, 2018
“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

Text: John 12:20-33

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. We don’t know if they were Jewish or Gentile and 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.

Jesus picks up the action in the story and becomes the main focus. His hour had finally come for him to be glorified. He was, of course, talking about his eventual crucifixion. Jesus knew that the authorities were looking for him. He knew he had ticked them off by raising Lazarus, an act of divine compassion borne out of human sorrow that was, for the Jewish status quo, the straw that broke the camel’s back. The action of the story has shifted, and we are shown a window into Jesus’s troubled soul. He knew that no further act, no other sign was sufficient to convince the world that he was, indeed, the Anointed One, the Word made flesh who came from heaven above to show humanity a little more of who God

is. The only act left was the ultimate sacrificial act—giving of himself on the cross for the sake of the whole world. Jesus knew who he was and what his mission on earth was. The reality of that moment was validated from above when a voice from heaven came and said that God’s name had been glorified and would be glorified again. Glorification would take place at the Cross.

Do you wish to see Jesus? When you come to this place, are you coming to seek Jesus and find him, or are you coming for something else? People are often asked if they believe in God or if they follow a particular religion. A lot of people these days identify themselves as “spiritual, but not religious.” In some sense, that may be a way just to get the person asking off their back and end the conversation. But, at the same time, what they are saying is that they are seeking something deeper than what the world has to offer. They are seeking something beyond the material, the superficial, the things that eventually fade away or break down, but aren’t finding it in the places that are supposed to be religious. Far too often we go around seeking Jesus, but are often met by those who are “religious, but not spiritual.” Far too often we come here seeking Jesus and we are met by folks who come to look cute—to see and be seen. We meet people who come to gossip and talk about other people. We meet people who come to complain: “I don’t like the mass. I don’t like the music. I’m not talking to this person. So-and-so made me mad. So-and-so sat in my seat.” We create all kinds of situations that inhibit us and other seekers from finding Jesus. Far too often people come to our Christian churches looking for Jesus, a place to belong, a place to be loved in the midst of an unloving world, and are met by a church that is judgemental, exclusive, unfriendly, unwelcoming, full of complaints, and just not life-giving. People come looking for Jesus, but instead we find church folk who don’t want to get to know them because they look different, talk differently, act differently, believe differently—just different. The Church itself too often acts “religious, but not spiritual” because it claims to love everybody, yet it excludes certain people from participating in its sacraments. You can’t take communion because you believe this way or you don’t believe our way. You can’t get married because we don’t like who you want to marry. We’re not going to love you, because you don’t think or act like we want you to. We’re not going to get to know the real you. We’re religious—but we’re sure not spiritual. Well, it’s no wonder no

body new wants to come here looking for Jesus. They come, and they find something else. They come saying, “We wish to see Jesus,” but they don’t find him.

Well, it doesn’t have to be that way. Jesus *is* present here. During this season of Lent, we have been gathering after mass to have conversations with each other about how we as a worshipping community are going about seeking Jesus. And you know what, you all are full of Jesus! There is so much Jesus in the things you love about this place. There is so much Jesus in the things you do find here. There is so much Jesus in the things that you dream about for this place and for each other. You can’t go around letting the things or people you don’t like and the things that are unfamiliar or don’t understand stop you from seeking and finding Jesus. Jesus is here in each and every one of us here and in the Blessed Sacrament that is constantly present. We come here seeking a place to belong, a place to be comforted, a place to connect, a place to be community. We come seeking nourishment at the altar, we come looking for Christ, and we find him present among us in Body and Blood. And we should look for Jesus when we leave here, even when we are met by people who are mean, disrespectful, or violent. We should be the voice of God by the words and actions of Jesus Christ to say to everyone, “You matter, God loves you, and I love you.”

Today’s gospel is meant to make us good disciples, good followers of Christ. “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 encourage us to say that we have seen Jesus and we have found him. We’re supposed to make it look like we have sought him, that we have found him, and that we know him. Nothing anyone else says or does can make us lose sight of him. 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’ve 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. When we come to Jesus, we stand or kneel before God. When we find Jesus Christ, we have found God.

Do you wish to see Jesus? I do, and I'm pretty sure you do too. Let's find him here, and let's help others find him, too. Amen.

Resources

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

Spiritual, but not religious, from *In the Meantime*, <http://www.davidlose.net/2015/03/lent-5-b/>