

5th Sunday Lent B 18

March 18, 2018

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.
Amen.

Some Greeks came to Philip and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Sir, we wish to see Jesus. These words are stuck in my mind and in my heart. After all is this not the desire of all of us if not always, at least at some point in our lives, the desire to see Jesus?

There was a professor who would say to us his students, 'people do not come to see you preach or to hear your words of wisdom, they come to meet and to see Jesus. For him each pulpit should have inscribed, 'we wish to see Jesus' as that is the purpose of proclaiming the word, opening your eyes and your heart to see and to know Jesus.

It was couple of weeks ago when I asked; 'where do you see or encounter God?' But today the focus changes especially as we edge closer to holy week and to Easter, today we look to see Jesus. In the reading from John seeing is an important sense of ours, and symbolic of greater message within the gospel itself.

Some of the first words of Jesus in the Gospel of John are 'come and see'. John the Baptist is standing with a couple of his followers, including Andrew when John sees Jesus and proclaims; 'Look here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.' So Andrew and the other disciple follow Jesus asking him where he is staying. Jesus responds by inviting them to come and see. But the first thing Andrew does is to find his brother, Simon inviting him to come and see the one they have been waiting for. Then the next day Jesus walking sees Philip calling him to come follow him. But first Philip finds Nathaniel saying; 'come and see for we have found the Messiah.'

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Seeing Jesus returns again and again from the 3rd chapter when Nicodemus who comes to see Jesus in the middle of the night, to the 4th chapter when Jesus encounters the woman at the well. Who Jesus tells her everything about her, she returns to her village inviting them to come and see asking could this man be the Messiah?

Yet when the Greeks come and want to see Jesus it is a milestone and a turning point in the gospel of John as Jesus turns to begin his journey to the cross. The cross is important as Jesus declares that when he is lifted up, he will draw all people to himself. All people meaning the whole world will come to know and see Jesus for who he is as the savior of the nations.

Again we have to step back and take a larger view of where we are in the Gospel of John because we stand at the turning point in the gospel in the life of Jesus. Back in chapter 11 Jesus is still on the road traveling, teaching and healing and performing signs when he gets word that Lazarus, his friend is ill. Jesus arrives after Lazarus has died and was buried. So Jesus promptly goes to the grave and invites Lazarus to come out of the tomb, Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead and everyone is amazed. Then at the start of chapter 12, Jesus enters into Jerusalem in order to attend worship at the temple for the festival. There great crowds come to find him and to see Lazarus whom he raised from the dead. Then in the verse just prior to our reading the Pharisees proclaim; 'See you can do nothing, look the world has gone after him.'

So as our reading starts telling us some Greeks came to Philip and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." We can connect the Greeks to being symbolic of the world that has gone after Jesus, the world that is seeking to see and know Jesus. Jesus as accomplished the purpose he came to achieve as he stated in the final verse for today; 'and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw

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all people to myself.' Jesus knows the cross is coming, but knows that it will come in time only after he has accomplished the purpose he was sent to do. Not until things are in place so that the whole world might be saved.

So when Jesus responds to the request of the Greeks by telling the disciples; 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.' Jesus understands the time is at hand, that his hour has come so Jesus turns his focus towards the cross where he will be lifted up. Reminiscent of our lesson last week as Jesus tells Nicodemus that just as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, so shall the son of Man be lifted up. That God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Again in the Gospel of John, Jesus often refused to allow things to take place saying 'his hour had not yet come.' It began when he first refused to change water into wine at the wedding in Cana. It happened when the mobs were angry and tried to kill him, Jesus was able to walk away because his hour had not yet come. Jesus' hour would not come until the world was ready to recognize and come to him.

With the arrival of the Greeks asking Philip to see Jesus is also a word of hope and promise for us. For like the Greeks, we are a part of the world as we come seeking to see and to know Jesus as the savior of the world. One of the places Jesus can be found is here whenever we gather in his name, where two or three or a hundred and three gather, Jesus is with us. This is a place where Christ has promised to meet us, especially as we gather each week here around Christ's table we meet and see Jesus. Here we gather to give witness to the mighty acts of God, here we receive the gift of grace and forgiveness as we hear the Lord say; for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sins no more. Here at Christ's table, friends and strangers become family as we are welcomed and forgiven, as we are fed and restored

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to life, here we are invited to taste and see the goodness of our God. Here we are able to see Jesus in the bread and wine, here we see Jesus in the faces of our neighbors.

Looking for Jesus, seeing Jesus in the world around us is a central theme I spend time talking about with the youth and adults as we prepare to go on the mission trips. I tell them to look for Jesus in the people we are there to serve, in the faces of those serving beside them. Each night as we gather to reflect on the day we share sightings of Jesus. Even at camp each year as we gather around the campfire each night the first question we ask the campers is 'where did you see Jesus today?' Often the youth respond by telling of seeing Jesus in the help they received from someone else. Of seeing Jesus in the faces of the homeless person who thanked them for the meal, in the hugs of a child they befriended or in the helping hand after they fell.

So where will you see Jesus this day?

AMEN

T.G.B.T.G.

Pastor Michael

John 12:20-33

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very 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. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor. "Now 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. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.