

“We Want to See Jesus”

- John 12:20-36

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on July 29, 2018

at JF Believers Church

in Menomonie, Wisc

John 12:20 - 36 *Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. 21 Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and*

Philip told Jesus. 23 But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. 24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. 25 "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor. 27 "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 "Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." 29 Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him." 30 Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. 31 "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." 33 This He said, signifying by what death He would die. 34 The people answered Him, "We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?" 35 Then Jesus said to them, "A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. 36 "While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.



If we step back just a few verses we read that there was a “lead up” to this event before us...beginning in verse 17 we read “Many in the crowd had seen Jesus call Lazarus from the tomb, raising him from the dead, and they were telling others about it. That was the reason so many went out to meet him — because they had heard about this miraculous sign. Then the Pharisees said to each other, “There’s nothing we can do. Look, everyone has gone after him!”

We are herein coming off the heels of the Olivet Discourse and a lot of “end times” discussion. We see around us today a world on the one side that seems quite smug in its self-reliance and dependence on no one. And yet, there is at the same time a quiet despair that slips through and finds its way to the pages of the local news as well as the faces of those we pass on the street each day of our living. The Hollywood suicides, the increase in marital breakups, overdoses, anger/personal violence issues, the rise in incidents of depression and the astronomical rise in dependence on pharmaceuticals to get through the day. It all very “hush-hush” and we try to pretend that we all are ok when it is quite clear we are not. Frankly, from where I am sitting it appears that society is literally unraveling, but I have no doubt my viewpoint is a bit skewed over here in the Jesus camp.

Haggai 1:5-6 speaks to this saying; “This is what the LORD of Heaven’s Armies says: Look at what’s happening to you! You have planted much but harvest little. You eat but are not satisfied. You drink but are still thirsty. You put on clothes but cannot keep warm. Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in pockets filled with holes!”

Job 20:22 adds to this thought; “In the midst of plenty, they will run into trouble and be overcome by misery.”

Our world today is quietly looking for answers and seeking some greater purpose. The proverbial “why am I here?” question still resonates in the hearts and lives of humanity. Bookstore shelves are full of materials dealing with inner peace and religious enlightenment, and the cultural battle-cry of “more is better” permeates our social structure from TV and movies to our vocational endeavors and financial spending. The world is truly looking for someone or something to save them. And for us that are believers? “Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.”

Our text herein follows immediately the “triumphant entrance” of Christ into Jerusalem, the crescendo of Christ’s earthly ministry. But how quickly the shouts of “*Blessed is the King...*” and “*Hosanna, Hosanna*”...or “*save us now, we pray!*” turned to “*Crucify Him, crucify Him!*” and the manifest declaration that “*we (will) have no king but Caesar.*” What happened in those few days? What got broke?

The truth is while man indeed desires to be free, he desires to be free *in this world* so that he can move about and do as he pleases. He thinks little if any about being free from the trappings of this earth, for he loves this earth and he wants all of it that he can get: houses, possessions, clothes, food, sex, and recreation. He is still living under the grand illusion that if all of that will not or cannot BRING him joy and satisfaction, he at least can have it all and still HAVE joy and satisfaction. Arrival at the great epiphany that the two are mutually exclusive is for most folks simply a concept too devastating to imagine. A bridge too far. Unthinkable in its ramifications and sacrifice.

Most of the people that had come out that day...as Jesus the king rode into Jerusalem, came not to receive a Redeemer and Lord, but rather a miracle worker, a ‘bread king’...a path in which all their dreams would come true. Many had seen Lazarus come back from the dead at the hand of Jesus, and wanted that same ‘ace up their sleeve.’ That same rescue from the pain and sorrow of ever having to leave this world and all its toys. But Jesus knew this fact as He rode into Jerusalem, saying in tears “*How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes. Before long your enemies will build ramparts against your walls and encircle you and close in on you from every side. They will crush you into the ground, and your children with you. Your enemies will not leave a single stone in place, because you did not accept your opportunity for salvation.*” (Luke 19:42-44)

These men that day, Greeks according to our text, had come seeking Jesus. Notice his response to such. He did not answer them “*Well, here I am! What is it you boys need from me?*” No, His answer was directed back toward the searcher. In an honest appeal Jesus declares the bold truth of the cost of following Him. The “cost” of “peace and purpose.” “*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.*” (John 12:24-26)

While the redemption of Christ is indeed a free gift in the fact that we cannot purchase or earn such a salvation, to say that it is “free” in the context of free from personal expense and sacrifice is simple not a fact. The stark truth is that such will actually cost us everything. This “misunderstanding”...or as often is the case, this “skewing of the gospel,” has had profound ramifications. It is because of this slant that we have seen what is no doubt the kingdom mustard seed grow aberrantly large and the “birds” roosting in it. One must be very careful here in order to not mislead or be misled! Such a doctrine of “easy Jesus” fails to see the demand of Christ: the demand herein for self-denial. It is a denial that demands the giving of **all**. All one **is** and all one **has** to glorify that same Savior and Lord, further His kingdom on this earth, and meet the needs of the lost and hungry around us. We are called repeatedly to serve each other, our church community, and the greater body of Christ by reaching out to a world that is lost and reeling in needs so desperate that the thoughtful mind staggers at the reality of it.

The common “Jesus Lite” understanding of Christianity fails to see the spiritual concern of Christ: His concern with bringing peace between man and God—with both **saving** mankind as well as seeing to it that man **lives** with God...to be a very **part** of God, and not separate and distant from such a relationship. Jesus repeatedly stressed the understanding that God is holy, righteous, and pure. Thus His concern was and is for man that he also live a holy, righteous, and pure life in order to be acceptable to that God. He taught clearly that He is concerned with man living a life of faith and diligently seeking God our Creator everyday.

“Sir...we would like to see Jesus...”

So just who was this one they sought? Who is the “true Jesus?”

So much of Him is represented by the colt He rode into Jerusalem that day. Firstly, the colt he rode was a symbol of peace. Jesus came to bring peace. But not “peace *of* earth” or “peace *with* the earth” but “peace *to those living on the*

earth.” Mt 10:34 *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.”* Ours is rather a peace that resides in the hearts and lives of his faithful that He sought to give. Living, breathing oasis’ of peace in the midst of a world of chaos. A peace between us and our Creator. *“And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven”* (Col. 1:20).

Secondly that colt symbolized service. It was a noble animal, an animal used in the service of men to carry their burdens. Jesus came that day upon the colt symbolizing that He came to serve men and to bear their burdens for them. *“Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many”* (Matthew 20:28). *“But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”* (Phil. 2:7-8).

The colt also symbolized sacredness. This particular colt had never been ridden before, and that fact had a sacred meaning. For animals and things used for religious purposes had to be that which had never been used before. The word we use is “sanctified.” That which is set aside for the *exclusive* use to some service. *This* therefore points to the very sacredness of the event. It presented for everyone that Jesus was shouting in proclamation that *He was the one exclusive sacred hope*, the promised Messiah of the people. He was declaring that He was their answer. *“For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me”* (John 6:38). *“Then said Jesus unto them, ‘When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him’”* (John 8:28-29).

There was profound reaction that day. Some of the people were sincere: they “believed on Jesus”. But many were as so many are in any crowd—simply sightseers, spiritual hitch-hikers, wanting to be where the people were and where the action was. They were after the excitement, the sensational, the spectacular. *“Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, ‘Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.’”* Matthew 12:38. *“Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”* In Matthew 23:28 *“Jesus replied, ‘You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.’ For you ignore God’s law and substitute your own tradition.’”* Mark 7:6.

Jesus said that His “hour” had come, and He was calling man to do the same as He would do. He was calling them to follow Him; to follow Him to the cross. For despite all the song and dance presented today in the name of Christianity, the fact remains that true Christianity calls for a man to lose his life. If he does, he will gain eternal life. If he does not, he will lose it. Cue the evening news, the secular blogs, the isles of self-help books and the ashrams of god’s and holy men around the world. It’s true. And in our hearts we know it no matter how fast and far we run...

“...unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”

Man must “lose his life.” What did Jesus mean by this unusual statement? Very simply, the person who *abandons* this life and world, who *sacrifices and gives* all that he is and has for Christ, will save his life. But the person who *keeps* his life and what he has and *seeks* more and more of this life, will lose his life completely and eternally.

The person who “saves his life”...*is he*

- who seeks to avoid Christ Lordship and denies Christ— he will lose his life eternally.
- who seeks to make his life more and more comfortable and easy and secure (beyond the necessary) and neglects Christ—he will lose his life eternally.
- who seeks to gain wealth and power and comfort by compromising Christ—he will lose his life eternally.
- who seeks the excitement and stimulation of this world and ignores Christ—he will lose his life eternally.

“He who honors me, I will honor.”

These words were first spoken by God in the book of I Samuel (2:30). They were also quoted in the movie *Chariots of Fire*. Some of you may remember the scene. Eric Liddell, the Olympic runner from Scotland back in 1924, had risked everything (including defying the king of England) by refusing to run in a heat on Sunday, the Lord’s day. His refusal meant rescheduling all the runners on the English Olympic team, and also meant Liddell would not run in the race he was most qualified for. This caused a stir in the papers... but on the day of the race, as the race was about to begin, Liddell was handed a note quoting the verse “he who honors me I will honor”. He ended up winning the race and setting a world record.

After the Olympics, Eric Liddell served in the mission field in China, and died at the age of 43 in a Chinese internment camp. His last words, talking about living life for God, were, “it’s complete surrender.” That’s what Jesus is talking about here. He’s talking about his own complete surrender to the Father’s will, and calling us to do likewise.

This Jesus is the one we are called to represent to the world. It’s an impossible task in our own power. That’s why we have to rely on God’s grace and the power of the Holy Spirit filling us up. As the body of believers we are called to share in Jesus’ joy and peace, ***and*** to share in His suffering.

Are we really followers of Jesus? Then as we follow him, our path will lead us into working together, and suffering together, and into glory together. On this path we will likely run up against two roadblocks: (1) our own natural inclination to duck out of suffering, and (2) as the old pastor of Cambridge, England – Charles Simeon – put it: “*the contempt and hatred of an ungodly world*”. He adds: “*we are not at liberty to shun the cross by relaxation of our principles or by any deviation from the path of duty.*” These are hard words to hear, and hard words to speak; but Jesus does not sugar-coat. The path ahead is not easy; but our calling is to follow the Lord of Love; and in doing so bring glory to God. And the fact is your life may be the only Bible some people read.

In this account we have heard about these Greeks who expressed their desire “*to see Jesus.*” Yes, these people expressed their longing to meet and encounter the person of Jesus. They were Greeks and thus non-Jews. They historically believed not in one God but in many gods, we call it “polytheism.” They were strangers yet they have desired to see Jesus. Most assuredly they had heard about him and the many works Jesus did – in healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, calming the storm and even raising the dead Lazarus. They might have been so curious about him that they wanted to see those things personally, but most importantly they wanted to meet and encounter the person of Jesus. For the word “see” also literally means “to know...”

Hence, the desire of those Greeks was not just actually about “seeing” but such entailed the desire to “know” and “follow” the Lord, to be his disciples. Yes, the Greeks had already the inclination to believe in him, as the Lord and Savior. Now, what is interesting was the response of Jesus to them. Jesus said, “*If you wish to see and follow, you must die, just like a grain of wheat dies so that it will bear much fruit. You must hate your life so that you will be able to follow me.*”

Sir, we want to see Jesus...

There will be those who come out to truly see this Jesus. For who and what He truly is. Who and what is Jesus to you today? What is your relationship to Him? Is He your Lord? Are you His servant? Do you “know” Him? If you answer yes, does your heart and then your life reflect that relationship?

The Bible says...*and we all know it...* that when we “believe on Him” we will be saved. Is that all there is? Just “believe” in the context that He was here, He was the Son of God, the Messiah, and our Savior/Redeemer? Well, such hinges our clear understanding of just what Jesus meant by “believing” in Him.

The word “Believe” (episteusan) and the word “Commit” (episteuen) are virtually the same word in the original. This gives the clear picture of just what *saving faith, genuine faith* truly is—the kind of faith that really saves a person. Saving faith is commitment—the commitment of a man’s total being and life to Jesus Christ. It is a man’s commitment of ***all he is and has*** to Jesus.

Want to see Jesus?

THIS is Jesus...