

Holy Spirit, touch my lips, open our hearts and transform our lives. AMEN.

Jesus has finally arrived in Jerusalem in today's gospel passage. Two people described as Greeks, possibly Greek Jews, or Greek gentiles there for the Passover festival, approach the apostle Philip.

"Sir", they say, "we wish to see Jesus."

Perhaps they heard the shouts coming from the procession into the city..... *"Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord – the King of Israel"*. I imagine right now everyone wants to see Jesus.

It's very likely that news that Jesus raised a man from the dead has reached their ears of many. This is a time when word of miraculous works travels far and wide. The people know of this and other "signs" that Jesus has shown. Jesus is attracting much attention.

This certainly did not escape the attention of the officials. And they were over the top with frustration by the fact they could not arrest Jesus right then and there, because of their fear of the crowds who surrounded him. We can hear the Pharisees complaining to each other. *"We can do nothing; Look, the whole world is following him"*.

So, it was no surprise these Greeks wanted to see Jesus too! They knew he was there, very near to them. He's right around the corner. "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Of course, they did!

Well, hey! Wouldn't you?

I believe there are a lot of people out there in our world that are desperate for a glimpse of hope. They want to know.....Are you really there Jesus?Jesus, are you just around the corner from where we are right now? Jesus, please tell us we have not missed the parade,Jesus, please tell us we are not too late!

The answer that Jesus gives Philip and Andrew was certainly not the one they had anticipated. I imagine they are excited about the way the people are drawn to their teacher. Their movement is finally taking hold. But instead of going to meet with the curious Greeks, Jesus talks instead about how *"the hour has come"*.

The hour was indeed coming, was upon him when the new covenant of God would be forged through his own body, through his own sacrifice. Jesus knows that his followers are not comprehending the plan...God's plan. So, he teaches once again.

He speaks of a kernel of wheat, a seed that once it was planted, would die in the earth, and rise forth as a plentiful harvest. A single grain is nothing in and of itself. But when planted, when broken open, contains the promise of so much more.

So, it is, with God's plan. Death precedes life. To hold so tightly to life as we understand it would be to squander life itself. It is by letting go of life, that we live it most profoundly. This is the pattern of loss and renewal we all experience in our lives and in the world around us. It is the way of nature,

the cycles of the seasons, the falling of the leaves and the new buds appearing. It is the appearing and disappearing of stars and sun in the sky, each in their turn.

These patterns appear in all our lives. Some small and others more significant. The childhood friendships that fall away, yet precious memories remain. The commitments we make when we fall in love. We let go of some of who we were as a single person in order to make room for the other person. Sacrifices we make when we become parents. And times when roles are reversed, and the child becomes caretaker for an aging parent.

In all of these things we die to ourselves and are changed. This is the crux of Jesus' teaching this day. Self-emptying love is the currency of the life to come. The pattern of loss and renewal, letting go and returning back, is at the core of our Baptism and what we declare each Sunday at the Eucharist – *Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.*

The fact that this gospel portion is set in the time of the Passover feast is not lost on us. This is the celebration of the Israelites liberation from bondage in Egypt. It is about the promise of new life and freedom in God's care. This is the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Letting go of that which binds us, dying to what holds us to certain death in this life, and moving in Him to new life.

"Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

In his beloved story Peter Pan, J.M. Barrie wrote: *"Dreams do come true, if only we wish hard enough. You can have anything in life if you will sacrifice everything else for it."*

Jesus challenges any that want to see him. He says, "come and follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also." This is quite the invitation. Would you have accepted it, knowing as we do, what is coming for him?

In our book group this week, we wrestled with the question just how much we are willing to be cracked open and emptied for the sake of the Gospel. Is Jesus really calling for us to give everything we value away, to dispense with every comfort, everything we have planned so carefully for in order follow him to the cross?

I remember being at a service where the preacher encouraged everyone there to open their wallets and empty them that day. He charged us to "give until it hurts". But this invitation from Jesus is not about something as insignificant as money and things. This is about offering up our very lives in Christ's name. And I think what that looks like and how it manifests is as varied as each of us are.

It's also important to remember that a seed planted in the ground on this day will not show a sprout tomorrow. Growth takes time and tending for seeds and for us. God is present in our formation and at work in us, in the dark places of cracking open and in the light and warmth of precious life.

So, here's an intriguing question. If those Greeks where to show up in our church here today, would they be granted their heart's desire? Have you ever considered that for many people in this world seeking that blessed glimpse of Jesus,

- **you** may be the **only** Gospel they ever hear,
- we may the only Good News they ever see in action.
- **People are watching us. People are watching me. People are watching you!**
- They are watching and wishing to see Jesus.

What do we have to offer them?

As those who claim the name "Christian", others are looking to us, to see what we do, how we act, who we welcome, and who we don't, what we challenge and what we embrace. People are curious to see if our actions match what we say we believe as followers of Christ. Will others find that glimpse of Jesus in us and through us that they are seeking? **Yes, people are watching.**

People are listening. What shall we say? Are we joyful in the knowledge of God's love for us? Do our words glorify God? Are we speaking out against the cruel joke made at another person's expense? Are compliments more plentiful than complaints in our everyday chatter? And are we willing to hold our tongues when it is more blessed to be silent?

Yes, dear friends, people are watching and listening. Will they see Jesus in us and in this place?

I pray that in this week leading up to Palm Sunday and into Holy Week that you will find the face of Jesus around every corner, in the faces, and the voices of those you meet.

Let us pray together the prayer attributed to St. Francis, found on page 833 in the Book of Common prayer.

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.