

Sir, We Wish To See Jesus

John 12:20-33

Trinity Lutheran Church

April 9, 2017 – Palm Sunday



In the name of the Father, and of † the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. When I was a student at the Seminary, like all the others in my class, I was assigned “field work” in a local congregation so I could “practice” all the things one has to do as a pastor. I was to assist with the Liturgy, preach now and again, teach a Bible class, and do whatever else needed to be done. One thing I especially remember was a well-worn, hand-written note taped to the pulpit which said quite simply: “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” The incident from this morning’s Gospel where these words are recorded took place shortly after Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem when a group of God-fearing Greeks approached Philip hoping to gain an audience with Jesus. Hearing their request, Philip went to Andrew, and then the two of them set off to see Jesus.

But when they went to see Jesus our Lord gave them what I’d characterize as a rather strange response. He said to them: “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” Now, perhaps you might recall how earlier Jesus made a similar statement to His mother at the wedding of Cana when He told her that His time *had not yet come*. But on this occasion He told Philip and Andrew that the hour *had finally arrived* for His glorification – and that this glorification would take place on Calvary’s cross where He would suffer and die for sinners, conquer Satan, and reveal His glory in a way no one expected. “I tell you the truth,” He said, “unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” Of course – in spite of the fact that few understood what He was saying – we know Jesus was speaking about Himself – that He is the Kernel of wheat that dies so that many new plants will spring forth unto everlasting life!

That was why St. Paul, in his letter to the Church at Rome, wrote: “Just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of {this} one act of righteousness was

justification for all men. Just as through the disobedience of the one man {Adam} the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the One Man {Christ} the many will be made righteous.” Paul’s words here remind us that Jesus’ crucifixion and death were accomplished for the entire world – and it’s precisely because of that fact that the request of the Greeks, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus!” prompted our Lord to speak these words. For you see, it’s only when you see Jesus dying on the cross for your sins that you really see Him as He must be seen – as the Seed which falls to the ground so that new life might spring forth. And on this day when we are celebrating the Confirmation of five of our congregation’s youth, this is an important message to emphasize, because it is precisely this message of Christ’s death for all sinners which has been drilled into their heads ever since the beginning of this process.

This seed of Christ’s sacrifice was first planted in you on the day you were Baptized – when you were planted in the grave and put to death with Christ in order that you might also be raised up with Him – a new, young, vibrant, living plant – growing, maturing, nurtured, fed with God’s Word, and fertilized with Christ’s body and blood in the Sacrament of the Altar. And that which is true for the beginning of your spiritual life, dear Christian, is doubly true for the rest of it as well – which is why Jesus also went on to say that if you love your life you will lose it, but if you hate your life *in this world* for His sake you will keep it for eternal life. So, do you love your life more than you love Jesus? Is your whole being wrapped up in what you want to achieve for yourself – or how you’re going to improve your “self?” Then Jesus says you will lose your life. But, who wants to hate their life? I don’t. But that isn’t exactly what Jesus is saying. What He means is that you should hate your life *in this world*. Being totally committed to Christ, you are willing to lose your life *in this world* for

His sake. You are to put a higher priority on Him than on the things of this world. Hmm, that sounds a lot like the 1st Commandment!

Next Jesus says that to serve Him you must also follow Him. And then He promises that if you do that, where He is, you will be also. And if you serve Christ, that means you will follow Him. But, where is He going? He's going to the cross, and to His death. And to the cross is where you are headed, as well. But, this isn't just any cross. It's a heavy wooden, splintery cross with the body of Christ hanging on it. Scripture teaches that this cross must be a part of your life as a follower of Jesus – even as it was also a part of His life. Remember, Jesus didn't have to go to the cross. After all, Jesus wasn't a sinner – or was He? There was no reason He had to die – or was there? Yes, in a sense, Jesus was a sinner. And yes, He had to die because He was carrying in His own body the sin of the world – your sin and mine. Though He knew no sin, He became sin so that you and I might live.

He is the Son of God. He could have asked the Father to save Him from this hour. But no, this was the hour for which He had come – and He would see it through to the bitter end. This is the context in which Jesus cried out: "Father, glorify Your name. Don't save Me, but use My death so that Your salvation might be earned and made known to all." And the Father replied: "I have glorified it! Through Your life My name was glorified once – and now, in Your dying and rising, I will glorify it again." The crowd didn't know what to think, so Jesus told them that these words had been spoken for their benefit. The time for the judgment of the world was now at hand. Now Satan would be driven out and His power stripped away. Our Lord Jesus would bear the cross in our place, removing all the power the adversary once held over our heads.

As Christ was lifted up on the cross He would draw all mankind to Himself. As He hung there, His glory would be displayed for all the world to see. His crucifixion would be His glorification. Through it He would save mankind from the terror of sin, death and the devil. So here, finally, is the answer to the query of the Greeks: "Sir, we

wish to see Jesus." Soon everyone would see Jesus in all His glory, dying for us poor sinners the death we deserved – earning God's favor for we who have no right to it – freely granting us forgiveness and life in His name.

Which of you – if you could have had a hand in laying out this plan to reveal God's glory – would *ever* have ever thought of revealing it in this way? Who would want the glory of a cross? And who would have ever thought of looking for glory in such an unlikely, unholy place as this? Yet there on that cross, by God's express design and purpose, is the only place where Christ's glory can be found. So, dear Christian, dear Confirmand, if your desire is to see Christ in all His glory, then it is the cross where you must look. And if you want the glory God promises to all those who belong to Him, the cross is where you must find it – for God's glory and forgiveness can only be found when you hate your life *in this world* and when you bear the cross of Christ – looking forward to that blessed world which is yet to come.

The trouble is you and I don't want to suffer. We don't want the cross. We're afraid of the cross! But the cross is the reason Christ came into our world. It's your reason for being. It's not only where the Son of God shed His blood for the life of the world, but it's where you must go if you want to see Jesus – if you desire His forgiveness and everlasting life. And fortunately, you don't have to go to Golgotha to see Jesus on His cross, for He has determined to come among us today with that very same body and blood which was given and shed on Calvary's cross for us sinners to eat and drink for our soul's salvation. So if you want to see Jesus, see Him now as He comes in His Supper – for here He has made Himself available to all who trust His gracious Word and promise. Here is where you may see Him, feel Him, touch Him, and taste Him – all for Your soul's salvation, and for the forgiveness of your sins. Amen.

And now that peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in that one true faith in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.