

#1767

Cf. #414 #829 #1054 #1291

John 12:20-23¹

The Greeks want to see Jesus,
and Jesus is glorified.

5th Sunday in Lent, *Judica*

Supplementary Lectionary Series “B,” Gospels

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Pioneer Pine Car Derby

St. Patrick’s Day

²⁰ Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” ²² Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

²³ Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”

“SIR, WE WANT TO SEE JESUS”

I. THE REQUEST

II. THE ANSWER

In the Name of Jesus our LORD and Savior, Dear Fellow-Redeemed,

Why are we here this morning? Why are you here this morning? Some may answer, “We are here to listen to God’s Word.” That is a good answer. Others might question the breadth of that statement, noting that God’s Word has two chief doctrines – Law and Gospel – and, that, while we certainly need to hear the Law, we have a greater need to hear the Gospel. Yes, indeed, we do have a greater need to hear the Gospel.

While hearing God’s Law is going to show us our sins and the condemnation and punishment we deserve, the Gospel of Jesus is going to assure us that all of our sins have been forgiven and that by faith in Jesus we have escaped and been freed from eternal condemnation and punishment. That is the assurance that these Greeks in our text wanted to have.

These Greeks wanted to see Jesus – Jesus their Savior. So also do we. We, along with these Greeks, have the same request: “SIR, WE WANT TO SEE JESUS.” “SIR, WE WANT TO SEE JESUS” – we look at I. THE REQUEST and at II. THE ANSWER.

“SIR, WE WANT TO SEE JESUS”

I. THE REQUEST

¹ *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984. All Scripture references are taken from this translation unless noted otherwise.

Palm Sunday had already taken place, during which Jesus had triumphantly entered Jerusalem amidst cries of

“Hosanna!” “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the LORD!” “Blessed is the King of Israel!” “Hosanna in the highest!” (Cf. Matthew 21:9b; Mark 11:9b,10; Luke 19:38; John 12:13b)

The people had cut down palm branches and placed them on the road Jesus was taking into Jerusalem; others took their outer cloaks and placed them on the road. Palm Sunday was the beginning of Holy Week.

The Jews had gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened bread, which continued for seven days after the Passover – beginning on Passover evening. In addition to Jews, there were some others who had also come up to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast.

“Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast” (12:20). We are not told any more about these men, but we can probably correctly speculate about them.

Through the Old Testament writings, these Greeks had been brought to believe in the One True God of Israel – the God who had promised to send the Messiah into the world. Unlike the Jews, these Greeks had probably not submitted themselves to many of the Old Testament rules and regulations such as circumcision. They were probably not among the zealots, who wanted an Israel of political and national importance. Like the Jews, however, these Greeks had heard about Jesus.

These Greeks had heard about Jesus. They probably witnessed and may even have participated in the joy and exuberance of Palm Sunday. They may have heard Jesus preaching and teaching or the preaching and teaching of his disciples – disciples such as Philip and Andrew, who are mentioned in our text. They may have heard about or seen some of the miracles Jesus was doing – miracles which verified that Jesus’ teaching was valid. So, these Greeks came with a request: “Sir, ... we would like to see Jesus” (12:21c).

These Greeks came to Philip with this request. Our text notes that Philip was from Bethsaida in Galilee, located on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, east of Capernaum. Philip’s name was Greek so that may have been the reason they came to Philip with their request. In addition, Bethsaida was on a trade route, so, perhaps, they had met Philip previously under different circumstances, although that was unlikely. All of this, of course, is speculation.

Philip may have thought that the request of these Greeks to see Jesus, was more than he could handle. Should he introduce them to Jesus, or should he not? So, Philip took their request to Andrew who was also from Bethsaida. The two of them went to Jesus with the

request of these Greeks. Philip and Andrew tell Jesus: “There are some Greeks here to see you.” How would Jesus answer?

APPLICATION

These Greeks had some previous contact with God’s Word and with Jesus. They were undoubtedly aware of Palm Sunday with its pomp, joy and exuberance. Previous to this, they probably heard about Jesus’ teaching and miracles. This is true of just about every one today – at least in our culture and country and in many other nations as well.

There is an overabundance – a plethora – of preachers on radio, television, cable t.v., and internet. Oh, there is certainly a question about the truthfulness and accuracy of these religious speakers, but it cannot be denied that the Name of Jesus is known. Even though there is the preaching and teaching of false prophets, the Gospel of Jesus may shine through the fog, mist and gloom of deceit and false doctrine. And, some who hear these various religious speakers, may be asking the question that these Greeks asked, “Sir, we want to see Jesus.” That is a request you ought also to be making.

You should be making this important request: “Sir, we want to see Jesus.” This is a request that you should bring with you into church on Sunday morning. It is a request you should bring into Sunday morning Bible class or Sunday School. It is a request you should be asking whenever you have devotions or read your Bible. “We want to see Jesus.” Your eternal salvation hangs on that request.

If you are thinking that your time in worship, or reading your Bibles or devotions, is time spent to earn commendation or applause from Jesus, then think again. If you think that studying your Bible is primarily so that you can be guided in your daily living, then you are missing the point. If you are looking at Jesus primarily as an example for you, then you are also missing the point. Wanting to see Jesus means desiring to see him as your Savior from sin, through whom alone you have eternal life. Your eternal salvation in heaven hangs on your request: “Sir, we want to see Jesus.”

So, Philip and Andrew bring the request of these Greeks to Jesus. We look to Jesus for the answer.

“SIR, WE WANT TO SEE JESUS”

I. THE REQUEST; now ...

II. THE ANSWER

Jesus’ answer indicates that at some point these Greeks did indeed have an interview with Jesus. We do not have the exact time or description of that interview. Jesus’ answer points to his contact with these Greeks as part of his glory.

In reply to the request of these Greeks, Jesus says, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (12:23). How would Jesus be glorified by contact with these Greeks?

Jesus had come into the world as a Jew. He was heralded on Palm Sunday as the King of the Jews and descendant of King David. Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar, “salvation is from the Jews” (4:22c). You also heard in our Gospel Lesson this morning, how Jesus initially responded to the Canaanite woman, who wanted Jesus to cure her daughter. Jesus told her, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs” (Matthew 15:26). Jesus was referring to “the children” as the Jews and to Gentiles, like the Canaanite woman, as “dogs.” Yet, Jesus had come into the world to save all people.

Jesus had come to save all people. Jesus demonstrated this to the Canaanite woman when he healed her daughter (cf. Matthew 15:21-28). Jesus demonstrated this to the Roman Centurion when he healed the Centurion’s servant (cf. Matthew 8:5-13). Jesus prophesied that this is what he would do when he said, “But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (12:32). Jesus had come into the world to save all people – both Jews and Gentiles.

Jesus came to save all people. This was in fulfillment of what the Father said to his Son as recorded by the Old Testament Prophet Isaiah,

***⁵ And now the LORD says—
he who formed me
in the womb
to be his Servant
to bring Jacob back to him
and gather Israel
to himself,
for I am honored in the eyes
of the LORD
and my God has been my
strength—***

***⁶ he says:
“It is too small a thing
for you to be my Servant
to restore the tribes of Jacob
and bring back those
of Israel I have kept.
I will also make you a Light for
the Gentiles,
that you may bring my
Salvation to the ends of
the earth” (Isaiah 49:5,6).***

Jesus would be the Savior of all people. Jesus' glory would come by way of the cross on which he took away the sins of all people – Jews and Gentiles – all!

APPROPRIATION

“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (12:23). Jesus' glory came by way of the cross. The pomp, spectacle and exuberance of Palm Sunday would fade to cries of “Crucify him! Crucify him! Crucify him!” It would be through the cross that Jesus would take away the sins of the world. It would be through the cross that Jesus would be glorified.

Through Isaiah, the Father said about Jesus:

**¹³ See, my Servant will act wisely;
he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.
¹⁴ Just as there were many who were appalled at him—
his appearance was so disfigured
beyond that of any man
and his form marred beyond human likeness—
¹⁵ so will he sprinkle many nations,
and kings will shut their mouths
because of him (Isaiah 52:13-15a).**

Jesus would be “raised and lifted up” on the cross; through the cross Jesus would be “highly exalted.” Jesus would be “disfigured” and “his form marred beyond human likeness” by his suffering, torment and crucifixion. But Jesus would “sprinkle many nations” with his blood. The blood of Jesus, God's Son, would take away the sins of the world (cf. 1 John 1:7b; 2:1b,2). By faith in Jesus, believers would have forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven. Jesus too indicated this fact – that he had come for all people.

You already heard Jesus state: “But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (12:32). Jesus indicated that in addition to being the Savior of the Jews he was also the Savior of the Gentiles when he referred to himself as “the Good Shepherd.”

Jesus said that he was the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep and took back again his life for the sheep (cf. John 10:11,17,18), Jesus also said, “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and One Shepherd” (10:16). The “other sheep” whom Jesus would bring into his “one flock” were all the believing Gentiles in addition to the believing Jews. Moreover, it would be the responsibility and privilege of believers – both Jews and Gentiles – to bring the message of Jesus – the Gospel – to others.

To his disciples, to believers, Jesus said, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to

obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19,20a). Jesus said, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mark 16:15). Jesus said that “repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his Name to all nations” (Luke 24:47). You and I are beneficiaries of Jesus’ command and promise.

Like these Greeks, we may be timid about coming to Jesus as we review our own sinfulness and unworthiness. Will Jesus forgive us? Will Jesus take us in? Will Jesus treat us as our sins deserve, or will he have mercy on us and forgive our sins? Jesus’ cross, through which he receives his glory, assures us that he treats us with compassion, mercy and forgiveness.

Jesus also sends us to others with the same Good News that has been proclaimed to us. Through the Gospel, you and I and others see Jesus.

CONCLUSION

On the top of one of the pulpits in one of our Wisconsin Synod churches is a brass plate with the words, “Sir, we want to see Jesus.” It serves as a reminder to the preacher that he is to bring Jesus into the view of the hearers. And, is that not finally the only thing that matters? - Seeing Jesus? - Believing in Jesus? Hear and believe the Gospel; in that way we have hope and life and our prayer is answered: “Sir, we want to see Jesus.” Amen.