

Year B, 5 Lent

March 18, 2018

✠ In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Some Greeks who were in Jerusalem approached Philip, one of the disciples, knowing somehow, that Philip had some kind of connection to Jesus. And, my understanding of the use of the word *Greek* here, doesn’t necessarily mean someone from Greece. But it certainly means someone who is *not* Jewish. They are Gentiles, and their nationality or ethnicity don’t matter, they were foreigners – but they were seeking Jesus. “Sir, we wish to see Jesus,” they asked him.

We’ll get back to the Greeks in a moment, but here’s something I discovered in my research this week. Apparently, there is a tradition in some churches – not here – that a small plaque is mounted in the pulpit, visible only to the preacher, so that when the preacher steps into the pulpit...he, or she, will see the plaque. And inscribed on the plaque is the phrase, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” *Show us Jesus!* That’s what we’re supposed to be doing up here in the pulpit – showing you Jesus. What an awesome and intimidating responsibility to be standing in the pulpit in front of an expectant crowd, and to read those words – *We wish to see Jesus*. I thought about that for a bit, and the only response I can think of to that request, is “be careful what you ask for...because you might just get it!”

*We wish to see Jesus*. Are you sure? Last week Nicodemus wanted to see Jesus – remember that? Our Gospel reading was the tail-end of Nicodemus’ “secret” visit with Jesus, after dark. And Nicodemus walked away from *that* conversation with more questions than answers, shaking his head saying, “How can these things be?”

What did those Greeks want with Jesus? Maybe they heard about his miracles: *Jesus – do that water into wine trick!* Perhaps they sought healing? Someone should have told these outsiders to be careful what they ask for because, I imagine, like Nicodemus, they're going to walk away befuddled. At the very least, I don't think Jesus will be spending the afternoon entertaining his Gentile guests with parlor tricks.

*We wish to see Jesus.* That used to be a prayer of mine. I used to pray that I might have a vision of Jesus, or a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary – just a glimpse, they didn't have to say anything, do anything, just show themselves to me – because I was certain that just the briefest of glimpses of the divine would satisfy my curiosity, would strengthen my faith – make my faith rock solid, unbreakable. Makes sense, doesn't it? If you see the divine with your own two eyes, then your faith becomes a certainty – no more doubt.

But now I realize that I might not want to see Jesus, because I know Jesus will see me – the real me – the me with all my imperfections, my false assumptions, my impatience, my intolerance of those different from me. He'll know about my lazy and undisciplined prayer life. He'll know about my selfish ways. You know, all those things I should be working on for Lent? I like to think I'm a tolerant, accepting, giving person, but I'm afraid Jesus would show me otherwise.

*We want to see Jesus.* Think about that. Think about the implications of meeting Jesus. Are you prepared for the possibility that Jesus will tell you that everything you were taught to believe, could be wrong? He may ask you tough questions: *why didn't you choose to love? Why did you choose to hate and fear others, instead of trusting them?* Are you prepared to have your biases and your prejudices ripped apart? Because Jesus has a tendency to turn things upside down, and what we believe to be the truth, Jesus might just show it to be our own wishful

thinking, our selfishness, or our close-mindedness. What *we* know for certain God wants, or what *we* know for certain God wills – well, we’re probably wrong there, too, because Christians have a long history of using Jesus to justify all kinds of *in*justices.

And here’s the thing – it’s not just the preacher in the pulpit who has to “show you Jesus.” *You* don’t get off the hook. As Christians, we all must be prepared to show Jesus to others. The unchurched are watching us. The skeptics are watching us. We will mess up from time to time, but we must be persistent in our desire to imitate Jesus – to show Jesus to others. We must strive to follow Jesus so completely that others will see only him through us. And so we must continually ask ourselves the question: Does my life point the way to Jesus?

*We want to see Jesus.* When people come through those doors, looking for Jesus, what will they find? Will they find a community of faith that accepts everyone, unconditionally, for who they are? Or will the newcomer have to try to fit a certain mold? Will they find this a place of healing, or will they leave with open wounds? Will they find a genuine welcome, openness and warmth and love... or cold hearts? Will this be a lifegiving place of spiritual growth and nourishment, or a church satisfied with living in the past? And will they find this to be a place where Christians are not afraid to stand up against injustice... will they find this to be a place where Christians practice what Jesus preached?

When people come through those doors, they want to see Jesus. The question is, will they find him?

AMEN

Ad maiorem Dei gloriam