

Sermon
Lent 5B 2024
John 12:20-33

Some Greeks want to see Jesus, so they reach out to Philip. “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip then goes to Andrew, and they both go tell Jesus. And then Jesus begins talking about his impending death. At first blush, this seems odd at best. Telling them that, no, he was sorry, he had a full calendar and couldn’t see them would have made sense. But the response Jesus gives just makes you scratch your head. This would be like Monica telling me there was someone in the office to see me, and I replied, “It’s time for the snow to fall. For if one flake falls, no one pays attention; but if many snowflakes fall, they create a new heart and allow people to share resources.” What?

As I’ve said, and as you and many others have noticed, the Gospel of John is . . . *different*. There are different time stamps. There is a different feel. There are different focal points. And it often seems like Jesus is thinking and talking on one level, while everyone else is thinking and talking on another level, as is the case today. The unnamed Greeks, Philip, and Andrew are talking about seeing Jesus like we would probably talk about seeing a person we’ve wanted to meet for a long time. Jesus is somewhere else.

“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”

If you want to see Jesus, look here.

In the Lenten devotional, Living Well Through Lent, there was a section called, “Forgiveness and Letting Go.” This particular section reminded us that in order to practice forgiveness we need to let go of control, resentment, self-righteousness, and other things that create a barrier to forgiveness. When we work on forgiveness, we are really working on changing our heart. Change and growth often (always?) require letting go of what was. We let go of some things and we take on other things.

The author mentioned an old joke, “I want to grow, but I don’t want to change.” Another way of saying that is, “I want our church to grow, but I don’t want to give up my pew.”

In the context of forgiveness, we let go. We let go of control and resentment, we let go of being controlled by the hurt and pain done to us. We let go of what was and become a new person.

In the context of the Church, we also evaluate, or reevaluate, who we are and what we want to accomplish. There are some things which we will choose to continue, but there are probably

some things of which we need to let go. We need to face the, “We’ve never done it that way before,” and the, “We’ve always done it that way,” arguments. Sometimes it’s okay to continue that way, but sometimes not.

All of everything I’ve been speaking of is about change. We change through our ability to forgive. We change in order to find new ways to minister. Our baptism changed us. Our Lenten disciplines change us. Christ’s death and resurrection changed him. It also changed the world. It should change us.

The Greeks who wanted to see Jesus wanted to see the superstar of their day. They wanted to see the man who changed water into wine. They wanted to see the man who raised the dead to life. They wanted to see the man who made the lame walk and the one who fed the 5000. But those things are only a part of who Jesus is. Jesus is also the Son of God, second person of the Trinity, the eternal Word, who sits at the Father’s right hand. He is God incarnate. If you want to see Jesus, you not only look for prophet, healer, and miracle worker, but you also need to look for him who died, was buried, rose again, and ascended to heaven. If you want to see Jesus, find the grain that falls to earth and dies.

The grain falls to earth, dies, is changed, and rises in a new form, bringing forth much fruit. Likewise, for us to see Jesus completely, we must also allow parts of ourselves to die so that we may be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory.

Those who love their life will lose it. Maybe this is a recognition that those who love their life in Christ Jesus are willing to lose those parts of their lives that keep them separated from God.

Sir, we wish to see Jesus.

You wish to see Jesus? Very well. What part of your life are you willing to let fall to the earth? What part of your life are you willing to lose, to let die, and to change, in order to see Jesus?

Amen.