

CS Sermon 5th Sunday of Lent

Seeing Jesus-John12v20-32

How much do you want to see Jesus?

Some Greeks came to Philip who was one of the 12 disciples and said “**we wish to see Jesus.**” Philip was a Greek name so they felt confident using him to gain access to an important busy person.

This Greek visitation is used by John to allow Jesus to explain the true nature of his specific task on earth - to die for the salvation of **all** those he created. It is not immediately clear that Jesus is referring to His death.

MY TIME

Jesus said “**The time has come** for the Son of Man to be glorified” which seems even more confusing as if the Greeks had something special for Jesus. However we might remember in John's Gospel, at the start of the ministry of Jesus at the Cana wedding, Jesus distinctly told Mary to leave Him alone because **His time had not yet** come. The miracle at Cana heralded the start of the healing and miracle ministry of Jesus, which John called 'signs'.

Jesus’ **time coming** was the time when **He had to die** and we see how Jesus immediately connected death with the power to bring new life (v24). “*Unless a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die it remains a single grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit*”. Jesus knew that He had to die in order for much fruit to be born. The fruit of the Messiah dying was that sin would be conquered and many would be freed from sin’s hold by Jesus also conquering the power of death.

It was time for God’s plan to be put in place. John’s Gospel reaches its key point when Jesus **turns** from miracles to face the cross through **His own sacrificial death** on our behalf. Jesus knew that the Greek’s coming **had been a sign**, or reminder, that those who were Gentiles (like us) would also have a chance to receive salvation (*and drew all people to himself v33*).

CAN I DO IT?

Jesus **knew** that this was God’s will and yet He was **deeply troubled** and wondered as a **human** whether he could go through with this. There was silence in the heavens. But from the very depth of His **divine being** Jesus knew God had to go through with His plan and said “Glorify His name.” At that moment a voice came from God, “I have glorified it (I have confirmed the plan) and I will confirm this again.” There was no getting out of it. Jesus had to be the sacrifice for our sins!

What is it that we expect when we meet Jesus at Holy Communion today? Do we think that we will just remember who He was or what He did, or do we expect something challenging, unexplainable and amazingly transforming in our lives? Will the body and blood of Christ be a memory of a sacrifice; or will it be a challenge for us to make a sacrifice ourselves?

*“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it will remain a single seed. If it dies it will produce many seeds. Those who love their life will lose it, those who hate their life **in this world** will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me will follow me”*

DYING TO SELF, AND SERVING

In our baptism we were taught that we died with Christ through the waters of baptism, so that we could rise again to new life in Christ. It meant not that we literally died, but that we entered a new

life of eternal dimensions where we serve God with our whole hearts. Where **God became our first priority and other things fell into place** – our education, our work, our family, our status, our suffering, our ambitions were looked at in the light of what God wants. When we do this we become ambassadors for Christ **urgent to see God's Kingdom established** in our own and other people's lives. ***When we put God first we begin to understand dying to self.***

"Whoever serves me must follow me and where I am my servant will also be." (v26).

Some of you might have watched Wolf Hall with King Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell. Thomas Cromwell is not a nobleman, but he is the right hand of King Henry VIII and, as such, is a faithful servant doing whatever is necessary to meet King Henry's needs. He does not always agree, but he does what he is commissioned to do and is effective because he keeps a watchful eye on all the courtiers; he knows their strengths and weaknesses, so is able to exploit them to the King's advantage. He is honoured with much responsibility because he is **faithful, but he is also vulnerable.**

Loyalty is what God requires of us - to follow closely and be available for the King's work before all other. We **can** serve God – faithfully and repeatedly, without question. **We do not always understand, but we do know that God is faithful to us** and *"honours those who are faithful"* (v26). ***When we serve God faithfully we die to ourselves and live for God.***

SPECIAL PURPOSE - UNIQUELY SUITED

Maybe sometimes we feel that we have a special purpose, but we don't know quite what that is. Have we either filed it away deep within our sub-conscious or have we realised that the time will come when God wants us to do something special for Him? **Finding out God's unique purpose for us is important. We are all made uniquely** and have our own God-given gifts which will play a role in the church. Jeremiah describes the future covenant as "I will be their God and they will be my people."

Coming up to the time of the year when the church elects its officers give us a chance to consider if indeed God is calling us. What can we do in the church which might be God's purpose for us? It doesn't have to be a big job like churchwarden. It could be supporting someone else in their work, or training in bereavement, welcoming new people or sick visiting, praying for mission or getting on a rota regularly, or cleaning the church. We don't have to like it, though having a gift to do it might be a sign of its rightness. We don't have enough people to do things in St John's Church, but it might be that God is calling you outside to support the Foodbank, chaplaincy in the High Street, homeless people or supporting Traidcraft or other causes that help people in need. ***When we find our God-breathed purpose then we begin to find ourselves and our new life in God.***

PRAYER AND FAITHFULNESS

Praying about this is the starting point and God will honour our efforts even if we do not think they are good enough. In fact to be dependent on God put us in a much stronger position. As Mother Teresa said ***"WE do not have to be successful, we need to be faithful."*** If we are expectant - and obedient - we will suddenly find God working through us, and saying, "This is my plan, I confirm it!"

I pray that **we will see Jesus** and that God will be a real presence in our lives so we will not be confused or afraid to turn towards the Cross, but totally clear about that particular thing Jesus has chosen **us** to do. This is SEEING JESUS.