

Passion Sunday

John 12:20-23

Exaltation Through Humiliation

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The writings of John are very descriptive and we can see a vivid picture of Jesus as the Son of God. There is a significant change with the writing of this text. The scene with the Greek's signal the closing of a chapter of Jesus. His ministry in Judaism is finished and he now belongs to the wider world.

But I invite you, for a few moments, to put yourself in the shoes of the Greeks who are at the center of this text. Their presence and interaction with Philip are pivotal to the events leading to the cross. For a moment, become one of the GREEKS in this scene. You fear God, and you admire the faith, and respect the traditions of the Jews.

You are used to attending the grand festivals.....but you usually are permitted to go no further than the Court of the Gentiles – which is the largest forecourt surrounding the temple sanctuary. A short wall stands between your group and the inner courts. You are very well aware of the warning to all Greeks “to pass beyond this wall will be viewed as a capital offense”.

But today, at this temple feast, something is different. You have an urgency you've never had before to *see Jesus*. You have heard lots of strange stories about this Jesus who doesn't “fit the mold” of who is *expected* as The Messiah. This Jesus does not preach an EXCLUSIVE message – *His message is all inclusive*. He associates with the Pagans. He talks about His Kingdom having room for all people.....people like US.....people who are outside of the offspring of Abraham. Could what you've heard be true.....or is it just too good to be true? Is the circle beginning to WIDEN to include us too? You are not satisfied to ask one time, but you *CONTINUE TO ASK to see Jesus*.

You don't want a third party message about him. You don't want a written message. You don't want a short statement of acknowledgment from his team. You are not looking for a “photo Op”. You continue to ask to see and speak to Him for yourselves. Face to Face – Up Close and Personal. Although you know you are considered to be “foreigners”, based upon what you have heard, you are now READY TO JOIN THE FLOCK OF CHRIST.

You are intrigued by the unique love, compassion, embracing presence Jesus has for EVERYONE: white and black, rich and poor, employed and unemployed, married and single, gay and straight, educated and uneducated, natives and foreigners, denominations and non-denominations, urban and rural.....*You Want To Encounter this Jesus for yourselves!*

Fast forward over 2000 years. The urgency is still with us to SEE Jesus in our world. We are tired of just going through the motions of our rituals, words, songs, and activities. We are

tired of empty smiles, boring questions, expected answers, and the surface comforts of clothes, neighborhoods, social groups, and THINGS!

We hear the questions:

DO YOU LOVE JESUS?

DO YOU KNOW JESUS?

But the yearning, the desire in our souls, at the end of the day is to unquestionably, without a doubt, SEE JESUS!

I am going to push the envelope this morning and ask you **WHY** do you want to see Jesus? Is it because you have read about the wonderful things He did that John wrote about?

- Do you want to meet the one who will set God's people free from the Prince Of This World?
- Do you want to meet the one who will lead people into eternal life?
- Do you want to meet the one who helps us triumph over all of our enemies?
- Do you want to meet our Redeemer, Our Liberator, Our Messiah?

What constitutes YOUR urgency to SEE Jesus?

We certainly are living our lives in a way that the people in the text would not have dared to dream about. Yet, with all that we have accomplished

With all that we have consumed

With all of our gifts, capabilities, and proficiencies – ***there is an EMPTINESS that grows***

- Some relationships with iPads are more intimate than relationships with loved ones
- Our school children are so enraged that the sanctity of human life has no meaning to them
- An innocent, unarmed boy named Travon is dead because of a self-appointed vigilante and pre-conceived judgments
- Our nation has forgotten the ***power of WORDS*** and how they so easily reveal our deeply-imbedded inhumanity towards each other
- All of the "ISMS" that divide our world... classicism, sexism, racism,.....the oppression, the weight of the pain seems to never end
- Our evil is complex
- We have forgotten that our greatest enemy is IN-A-ME!

Even during this Lenten Season – the church of Jesus Christ is filled with: Emptiness, Hopelessness, and urgency and a longing for meaning and real purpose. And we ask just like the Greeks did when they said: ***"We would like to SEE Jesus!"***

The scripture does not record if they saw Jesus or not that day. However, the answer from Jesus was not expected: ***"the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified"***

GLORIFICATION.....EXALTATION.....is fitting for a KING. But the exaltation and the GLORY for our King would come through Humiliation and Shame. The writing of the remaining verses of this chapter teaches a lesson about how true glory and exaltation is achieved.....***by death and new life***. The followers of Christ wanted to see a VICTORY STORY that was clean, bright and decisive. But Jesus ***"flipped the script"*** of their expectations and proclaimed a GOOD NEWS that touches the stability of our lives.

I ask WHY YOU WANT TO SEE JESUS because we cannot see Jesus without seeing THE CROSS.

"Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me."

Our desire to SEE Jesus is being willing to see His cross and ***being willing to take up our cross***. There is a PRICE – a COST – in wanting to SEE JESUS.

Too many believers cannot handle uncomfortable situations. We don't want to be hurt in public, embarrassed in public, shamed in public, lied on, gossiped about. We have worked too hard.....sacrificed too much.....paid our dues.....and we will not be put to shame! Well, followers of Jesus Christ, that is exactly what Jesus did for us. He was embarrassed in public, shamed, lied on, gossiped about. ***But he stayed on task and continued to do what He was purposed to accomplish.....up to and including sacrificing His life for us!***

The cost of SEEING JESUS is our very lives:

- Giving up the direction of our lives to Christ
- Giving up the CONTROL of our lives to Christ
- Dying to ourselves and GETTING OUT OF THE WAY

Seeing Christ is not a spectator sport. Seeing Jesus is more than looking at Him and saying "Jesus lived and died for me". Seeing Jesus is participating in His life, death and resurrection. Surrender your lives to Him and move from loneliness to fruitfulness, move from serving yourselves to serving others through Christ, move from pleasing yourselves to receiving God's honor.

Christ was exalted through humiliation; and today He is still being LIFTED UP so that all people will find the way, know the truth, and receive the life.

The cross reminds us that God loves the WHOLE WORLD and it is our task to take up our cross and through His love, share His message.

What are you willing to give up for the sake of really SEEING JESUS?