

5 Lent; Year B  
John 12:20 33

Some Greek gentiles who were visiting Jerusalem for the Passover came to Philip, the disciple, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

Evidently they had heard the rumors, and they had been listening to the stories, and they were curious.

So these Greek tourists who had come to Jerusalem for the festivities found Philip, who was reported to be a friend of this person they had been hearing about, and they said, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

I believe you and I can relate to that.

Isn't that why we're here?

We have heard the rumors, and we have been listening to the stories, and we believe, or we want to believe, or maybe we're trying to cover all bets, and we want to see Jesus.

I believe we are right there with those Greek gentile tourists in Jerusalem.

After the Greeks told Philip that they wanted to see Jesus, Philip went and told Andrew, another disciple, and then Philip and Andrew went together to see Jesus.

When they told Jesus about the request for an audience

Jesus didn't say, "Go ahead and bring them here," and he didn't say, "I'm sorry, I'm not able to see them right now."

He said, in a puzzling kind of response, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

And while it's a puzzling response, I believe you and I can relate to that, too.

We want to see Jesus, and if we're going to get to see him, let's see some glory.

Let's see some turning water into wine.

Let's see some walking on the Sea of Galilee.

Let's see some curing the sick and raising the dead.

Let's see some glory!

Well, this morning, as pilgrims of faith, we are approaching the gates of Jerusalem.

Our Lenten journey has brought us very close, and as we prepare to go into the Holy City next week on Palm Sunday, and to participate in all of the events of that Holy Week, this morning's gospel story offers us a lesson about where to look for Jesus, and about how to experience the truest glory of God.

So, what does Jesus think about glory?

He gives us a pretty good hint right after he says, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

And what he says is a little like cold gospel water in the face. He says, "Very truly, I tell you, 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."

That's what Jesus thinks about glory.

How about us?

What do we think?

What do you and I think about glory?

In Hebrew, the word for glory is kabod.

In New Testament Greek, glory is doxa.

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When they are translated into English, both of those words imply honor or renown or splendor.

So with that in mind, where does the world look for glory, for honor, or renown or splendor?

If you pick up the Union-Tribune sports section and search out the page with high school basketball news, are you likely to find a story about the player who is the first one to arrive for every single practice and the last leave, and who sits on the bench for almost all of every game, because he's just not a very gifted basketball player?

In professional journals or business news, are there ever stories about employees who turn down promotions or reassignment because it's best for the family?

Do we hear anything, anyplace about the woman who puts aside a lifetime of dreams and education and well-honed skills because she believes it's more important to become an advocate and to tend to the needs of her developmentally disabled daughter?

Does the world glorify, or even notice, the researcher who spends his entire adult life looking for a cure for a deadly genetic disease, but who dies in old age without ever coming close?

Two weeks from now on Easter Day churches around the world will see their largest congregations, by far, of the year. Only a short time before that, on Good Friday, finding a seat in any of those same churches won't be any trouble at all.

Where do we look for honor or renown or splendor?

Where does the world look for glory?

“Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”

That little grain of wheat is a tough little seed that falls into the dirt, and then the rain falls and the sun shines, and that tough little shell cracks open, and amber waves spring forth, and there is bread to feed the world.

Jesus says that it in the cracking open and dying of that little seed is the glory of God.

It is a theme we have been hearing all through this season of Lent, but if we haven't heard it before, let's make sure we hear it today as we approach the gates of Jerusalem.

Let's know where to look for Jesus and for the glory of God.

If we look where the world would have us look, we will miss it every time.

And another thing: If we look where the world tells us to look for glory there will always be comparisons and competition. When there are comparisons some-thing or some-one is always going to come up short.

And when there is a contest to see who can be the richest or the biggest or the fastest or the smartest or the best-looking, there can only be one winner, and everyone else is a loser. But the winner doesn't win for long, because there are always others striving and fighting and waiting to replace the one at the top of the heap.

Jesus said, "Those who love their life will lose it, and those who give away their life in this world, will keep it for eternal life."

The glory of God in Jesus was in Jesus' becoming small and poor and weak in the eyes of the world.

The honor and renown and splendor were in the breaking open of that body so that Jesus could become food for the whole world.

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Now is the time for us to be strengthened and sustained by that food.

Now is the time to shut out the warped ideas of the world and to see Jesus.

We are approaching the gates of Jerusalem.

Very soon, with Jesus as our guide we will go in, and we will know where to look, and we can see, and we can experience and we can become all the glory of God.

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