

"Seeing Jesus"

John 12:20-33

April 2, 2006

I love the innocents of youth. I think often of the story of the young girl that was busy drawing some pictures at the dinning room table one day. At one point her mother stopped and asked about her drawings. The girl was delighted to explain every one in detail. She had just started a new drawing, so the mother also asked about that one - what was she going to draw now? The young girl did not hesitate before telling her mother that she was going to draw a picture of God. The mother expressed appreciation for what she was going to do but added, "You know, nobody really know what God looks like!" To which the daughter responded without hesitation, "Well, they will as soon as I get done with this picture."

"Sir, we wish to see Jesus." It was such a simple request.

It is a group of Greeks that come seeking Jesus. But then, I suspect that they were not alone. This text actually comes immediately after the events that we will remember and celebrate next Sunday - Palm Sunday. When the Greeks come with the desire to see Jesus it was immediately after He had entered into Jerusalem on a donkey to the shouts of Hosanna. Who would not want to see Jesus? The Pharisees were disturbed because with all of their attempts to discredit Jesus it seemed as though they had failed and, as they saw it, "the whole world had gone after Him." Why did they come? What did the Greeks want to see in seeing Jesus? - Perhaps they had heard of the miracles He had been doing. Perhaps they were curious as to who this great miracle worker was and wanted to get a closer look.

Do you want to see Jesus? Why? What do you want to see?

I want to believe that those Greeks were more than curiosity seekers. -- I want to believe that it was more than the "paparazzi" out looking for the latest movement of the 'stars' - the celebrity of the day. "Sir, we wish to see Jesus!" Is it like saying I want to see Elvis or the President of the United States - or someone else that is famous or powerful?

Do you come wanting to see Jesus? What exactly is it that we want to see? I often wonder if we ever really see Jesus - or do we only see what we want to see? Is Jesus just the guy in all of the pictures with long flowing hair and beard - peaceful - standing at the door knocking - holding a lamb - taking a young child into His arms? Is that all? Is the Jesus we want to see just the one who walks on water and enters like a celebrity to shouts of Hosanna? If that is what we want to see - have we really seen Jesus?

I remember reading about the process of ‘seeing’ in an encyclopedia. It was really interesting. I should have check this out with the pros but what I remember is that seeing begins with our eyes capturing an image through the lens (much like the lens of a camera) and that image is projected onto the retina (the film). That image is actually received inverted - up-side-down. The material I read made an interesting comment about seeing. It said that the actual process of seeing is performed by the brain - not the eye. We have to put the brain to work to interpret the up-side-down image.

Have you seen Jesus? Do you really want to see Jesus? Or will you be content to just see the celebrity? When the Greeks come asking to see Jesus, He doesn't throw on His crown and fine royal robes to make His appearance -- instead He talks about a grain of wheat, falling to the ground - dying. He talks about losing His life / losing our lives in serving. And He talks about living to glorify God.

When you see Jesus - - - do you really see Him? When you see the baby in the manger - do you see the depth of God's love that compels Him to come in humility to save us? When you see Jesus walking on the water - do you see and hear a call to total faith in God as we live our lives? When you see Jesus feeding the 5000 do you see Him feeding you? When you see Jesus on the cross - do you see a grain of wheat being sown in the ground and ready to spring up to provide bread for the world? Do you really see Jesus? There was a crowd gathered around Jesus that day as He talked about a grain of wheat falling into the earth and dying. They heard Jesus say that they must lose their lives in order to keep them for eternal life. But when the very voice of God tried to lift Jesus up for all to truly see all they heard was thunder.

I ran across a rather disturbing story about a Christian named Rodrigus from the 16th century. He was brought to Christ by some great Japanese Christian teachers at a time when Christianity was flourishing in Japan. But things changed and Christians and Christianity fell into a time of great persecution. Under the pressure many Christians were turning away from Christ. Rodrigus decided to go to Japan and see why so many were turning ways from Christ. Upon arriving he found a desperate situation where Christians were being arrested - and before he knew what was happening, he too was arrested. The story told how he was placed in the small dark prison cell where the only thing he could hear was a sound that he thought must be one of the guards snoring. But he soon learned the truth. In a cell nearby were several prisoners - Christians who had been arrested and forced to make a public statement rejecting Christ. Under pressure each prisoner had done so - - - but they were still in prison. One of those prisoners was the teacher who had brought him to faith in Christ. There in their dark cell they had been hung up-side-down by their ankles - their breathing was extremely labored -- and it was made worse by the fact that their faces were half buried in human excrement. Rodrigus was told that if he rejected Christianity those prisoners could go free. All he had to do was step ever so lightly on a statue of Christ that was brought in and placed on the floor in front of him. The story said that the statue was dirty and smudged with what appeared to be thousands of toe prints from those who had taken the road of

rejecting Christ. As he thought and looked at the statue, the image of the most important thing in his life, all he wanted to do was grab hold of it and kiss it. But then the image of Christ began to speak to him - it said "Trample on me - I know your pain - Trample on me - It was to share your pain that I came - put your foot down on me!" And Rodrigus put his foot down, trampling on Christ. --- The story ends with two powerful lines -- it said: "Out in the distance a rooster crowed. But some said that it thundered."

I really struggle with the story. It is hard to know what to make of it. But then I often struggle to see Jesus clearly. I like seeing the celebrity. I want to see the glorious Jesus? I know that it is true that I often have so many things running thru my mind that I only hear thunder when God speaks. Do you want to see Jesus? If you want to see Jesus in His glory, perhaps what your eyes will capture is the image of one who has been trampled upon - one who has been denied and rejected on His way to the cross. If you really see that Jesus - you will see true love.

AMEN