

# John 12:20-33 Sermon

## We Want to See Jesus

Line of Duty Starts tonight. I have enjoyed previous series. I am not sure I have the intellect to understand all that is going on. And I know it will not be easy to follow tonight's program unless given a recap of what has happened so far

And so it is with understanding today's Gospel reading from John finds Jesus in Jerusalem for the very last time preparing for the Feast of the Passover. So we are a little ahead of ourselves as we celebrate Palm Sunday next week. But a lot has gone on up to this point

Jesus arrives as a person of no uncertain notoriety; a charismatic revolutionary threatening the status quo with words and deed.

Jesus has performed an ever-escalating series of miracles that point to his divinity. Turning wine into water. Giving sight back to blind and mobility to the lame

In John Chapter 11 we are told the story of the biggest miracle of all - the rising of Lazarus after 4 days dead.

What an event. What a statement. What does it all mean? Who is this Jesus? Everyone is amazed and wants to find out more, for instance, by following Jesus

The religious Pharisees of the day are flummoxed and spooked. and complain in 12:19 "Look, the world has gone after him!" They now plot to make the problem of Jesus go away by killing him – when they can

Intense interest comes from fellow Jews.. And intense interest comes not just from the Jewish population but a group of Greeks who have also come up to Jerusalem at the same time as Jesus to prepare for Passover Feast

I am intrigued by these Greeks. Who are they and why are they important to understanding today's passage?

The status of the Greeks is uncertain. One explanation is their status is that of Gentiles who believe in the God of Abraham, having come to participate in the Passover feast. They may be preparing for conversion, but they are not yet fully Jewish. In short, they are gentiles

In this reading the Greeks are a metaphor for gentiles seeing God through Jesus.

As non-Jews, they cannot easily approach Jesus directly. But they dearly want to see a man who can raise the dead. So, they go in for a little NT social networking. They ask to the most Greek sounding named disciple, Philip. Can we have an introduction?

So, Philip tells Andrew about the request for an audience and then the two disciples, Andrew and Philip go and tell Jesus. No big deal, you might think. We might be expecting a *yes-why-not* or *no-too-off mission* quick answer

Instead, the Greek's request seems to almost **trigger** Jesus. We never get to find out if the Greeks ever got their audience with Jesus for we get an enigmatic not-actually-answering-the-question response which, to use one of my favourite words of the day, pivots the discussion to a completely new topic.

23 Jesus answered them, **“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”**

“My hour has come”. This is it. The prologue is over. This is the series finale.

And we now need to get our head around several paradoxes – statements which seem to contradict each other.

Jesus is to be glorified. Glorification means reflecting the awe and majesty of God the Father as God the Son

And yet glorification will be achieved in the most unexpected way through a humiliating death on the cross

Jesus explains with an agricultural metaphor why he must willingly sacrifice himself on the cross so that his one death may bring life to millions.

This is captured with the image of a grain of wheat falling to earth , dead and then generating a salvation harvest

We are told another paradox: Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life

Over Lent the Benefice has run a series of Come and See sessions. The tagline come and see is from John 1:39. The Come and See is the invitation Jesus gives two disciples, including Andrew, at the beginning of his ministry in John 1:39. I wonder if Andrew remembers that come and see invitation as he intercedes on behalf of the Greeks for them to come and see also?

Several Come and See Sessions have used the technique where you read a passage several times and share a phrase or passage that stick out for you. It will be unfair to ask you to name the phrase or passage that stands out for you in today's John reading. But I can share mine *those who **hate their life** in this world will keep it for eternal life* "hate their life" or hate their life in this world.

What does Jesus mean? Why does this phrase jar for me?

**Hate** is an extraordinarily strong word.

Jesus is not asking us to hate the world. Hating the world can easily be misunderstood and seen as an invitation to withdraw into our holy places as sanctuaries and have as little to do with the world as possible.

We are not called to hate the world. Rather we are called upon to **reject of worldly values**.

For example, money and wealth. Money is not evil; earning an income is not evil; However, love of money is a root of evil. Ruthless pursuit of more than enough is to give into world views and worldly powers. But generating wealth gives opportunities for giving. It is about a material or spiritual mindset.

**Come and See becomes Come and Be.. Come and Be with me**

If early in John, Jesus invites us to **come and see** then today's reading expands on that invitation. We move beyond come and see to an invitation to come and be, or more precisely, come and be with Jesus in a journey of self-sacrifice: v26 Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also.

. Follow me. Be with me. Be where I am. For me, this is a personal challenge is try and imagine what being with Jesus looks like in the times of COVID

I know I am called to a life of self-sacrifice and giving. But I do doubt my spiritual will powers – am I alone

Doubt is part of the human condition. Importantly, Our God knows exactly what it is to be human by taking the form of a human in Jesus.

Jesus knew doubt. We read in V 27: Now my soul is troubled.

His mental well being is disturbed by the prospect of what is ahead

But the Jesus in John is supremely self-confident. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.

Our OT reading gives us reason to be equally supremely confident. We too can draw confidence from an unshakeably certainty about the New Covenant described in our reading from Jerimiah Jeremiah 31:31-34:

- **The days are coming** of a new covenant Made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus
- This new covenant is not like the old covenant: based on merit and works: ("If you do . . . I will do"). Just be sure to follow the rules
- The NC the law will be put in the minds and written on the hearts of God's people
- So we are not **saved by our works** but by our faith in Jesus and his forgiveness of sins from the sacrifice of Christ
- The new motivation for obeying God's law is inner knowledge of his will, coupled with an enablement to perform it—all founded on the assurance that sins are forgiven.

There will be direct access to God for both Jew and Gentile through Christ,

What will being with Jesus in the days ahead look like? This will vary by individual. It will be about being generous in using our gifts and talents. There will be an increased concern for stewardship of God's earth through environmental work. There will be a passion for social justice. We will be moved to be generous with our time, for example, by calling those isolated by Covid self-isolation. And there will be generosity

On our journey: Small acts of kindness and self-sacrifice in gratitude for the ultimate sacrifice of Christ and with it the promise of an abundant life on earth and in eternity for his followers

And we can draw comfort from knowing that "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."