

LORD, HELP ME SEE JESUS

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ March 13, 2016

²⁰ Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” ²² Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. ²³ Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵ The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. ²⁷ “Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” ²⁹ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. ³⁰ Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. ³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. (John 12:20-33)

Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,

“Lord...we would like to see Jesus,” that is the request that begins today’s text. Although this was the Passover, the time of year that Jerusalem was teeming with Jews from all over the world, this request to see Jesus does not flow out of a Jewish mouth. No, this request comes from individuals of Greek origin. Yes, some Greek individuals had learned about the God of the Jews. They had begun to believe in the Lord God Almighty and to worship him. They even journeyed to Jerusalem to worship at this most holy of Jewish feasts.

But why do they want to see Jesus? John doesn’t tell us in our text. But it isn’t hard to understand why they would make such a request. Upon coming to Jerusalem, the city was abuzz with talk about this teacher from Galilee. Not long before, in front of a large crowd of witnesses, he had raised a man named Lazarus from the dead just a few miles east of Jerusalem in the village of Bethany. Two days before he had entered the city of Jerusalem riding on a donkey. Everyone was cheering hymn, cutting down palm branches and laying them in his path as a sign of honor. Just the day before he had thrown out of the temple the money changers and those selling sacrificial animals. And, now they want to see, to talk to, and to listen to this amazing prophet. They want to see what everyone was so excited about. They want to see his glory.

They don’t come to Jesus directly. They first ask Philip, one of his disciples. Philip in turn speaks to Andrew and the pair of them convey the Greek request to Jesus. But Jesus does not respond with “*Send them on over.*” No, rather this request causes Jesus to tell those around him what was soon going to happen, and to show them what his real glory would be. Jesus’ true glory is not the parables that he told or the miracles that he performed. His true glory cannot be seen by human eyes. And so like the Greek believers 2,000 years ago, we say “LORD, HELP ME SEE JESUS.”

1. Through the glory of the cross
2. Through the glory of the Christian

(1)

Jesus begins with the statement, “**The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.**” Why does he call himself the “**Son of Man?**” Well, it’s so the Jewish people wouldn’t be confused. You see, the Jewish people firmly believed that the Lord would keep his promise and send a Savior, what the Old Testament prophets regularly called the “*Messiah*.” The prophets of the Old Testament said many things about the coming Savior, but the only things that *most* of the Jewish people paid attention to were the prophecies about how he would destroy the enemies of the Jews and rebuild the country of the Jews. In short they were looking for a Savior who would be oozing with glory that they could see.

It’s true that the Old Testament prophets said those things about the Messiah, the coming Savior, but they also said some things about him that were very different, specifically they talked about him suffering and they talked about him dying. Most famously, the Prophet Isaiah had said in his 53rd chapter: “**He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.**”

Not very glorious! But, as I said, most of the Jews conveniently forgot all that stuff when they hear the word “*Messiah*.” So, instead of calling himself the “*Messiah*” and causing all sorts of confusion, some 80 times in the Bible the Lord Jesus refers to himself as the “**Son of Man.**” We might say, the *Substitute Man*. And now Jesus goes to great lengths to tell all those who were listening why he came, and in that what his real glory would be. He does so by saying: “**I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.**”

Even though we don’t have a lot of farmers here, you understand what Jesus was talking about. When you go out and plant sweet corn in your gardens, you actually bury the seed, don’t you? And that seed decays in the ground. But through that decaying process a large plant with many edible kernels is born. If you just keep the seeds in the packet, nothing will happen. It’s only when you bury them and they die, they you will see the glory of a harvest. So Jesus is saying, that he, the Son of Man must also be buried in the ground in order to achieve the glorious purpose for which he was sent.

We can’t go any further without being reminded – as we need to be in every sermon – why it was necessary for the Lord Jesus to die in this way. It was not because he had done anything wrong. It was because you and I have disobeyed and rebelled against the Lord God Almighty. But I wonder if we recall the severity of the situation. Oh, sometimes something happens in our life as a result of some particular act that we have done and we have to bear the consequences. But my guess is that most of the time the days roll by and who we are and what we’ve done doesn’t particularly bother us.

But the Old Testament Prophet Isaiah shows us the true severity of the situation when he says, “**Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins has hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. For your hands are stained with blood, your fingers with guilt. Your lips have spoken lies and your tongue mutters wicked things.**” And the prophet wasn’t just talking about those that we classify as wicked. He was talking about you and me. And it is only through faith – only through believing what

God's word tells us about ourselves – that we begin to see the severity of our situation, just how bad we are in God's eyes.

But Jesus, the Son of Man, came **“not to be served by to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”** That doesn't mean it was easy for him. He says in our text that his heart was troubled by it. As a true human being, his body recoiled from the thought of torture and death. Yet, as true God he could not turn away from his Father's plan, turn away from earning our rescue by his death on the cross. And so he shouts out, **“What shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!”**

And the heavenly Father did what he asked. He provided a sign. He spoke from heaven as he had done when his Son was baptized, as he had done when Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James and John. He spoke from heaven and announced, **“I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.”** Some thought it had thundered. Others believed that an angel had spoken. Again, it only seems to be Jesus who fully understood what had happened. And he explains it for his disciples and for us: **“This voice was for your benefit, not mine.”**

God's words from heaven are for our benefit. For it's only when we hear them and walk by faith and not by sight that we not only see who we are and what we've done to anger the Lord, but that he see his full glory revealed. It's not in some mighty miracle like calming a storm or raising Lazarus from the dead. No, we by faith we see Jesus' real glory only as he willingly hung on the cross, suffering God's punishment for our sins.

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But as we look more closely at our text, the Lord Jesus is not just giving his disciples a preview of *his* true glory, the glory of the cross. He returns to a theme that he has spoken of before and he gives his disciples – gives us – a preview of what *our* true glory as Christians is as well. Listen to Jesus' words: **“The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.”**

The disciples like every human being had their hopes and dreams. Remember how once they had argued among themselves about who would have a more glorious position – like a higher cabinet post – in heaven? But earthly glory – being wealthy, being respected, even being happy – is not the true glory of a Christian. In fact Jesus says that the **“man who loves his life will lose it.”**

The fact of the matter is that being a disciples of Jesus puts us in harm's way. When we love Jesus enough to say with Joseph in the Old Testament, **“How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”** Many – perhaps even some Christians – will always scoff at us. When we stand up for what God's word says about some of the *tough issues* in the Bible like abortion or homosexuality, we will not be praised by many. Our sinful nature may rebel against what God's word says too. And sometimes the worst thing is when we see what's happening in our world and even in the Christian Church – how right has become wrong and wrong has become right – and it doesn't look like there is a thing we can do about it.

But that isn't the end of the misery Christians endure in the world. The Apostle Paul said, **“We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.”** And he wasn't kidding, was he? Christians

certainly aren't immune to economic difficulties or health problems, to stress and relationship issues. And again there often doesn't seem to be one thing that we can do about it. Sometimes we turn our heads to the sky, troubled like Jesus was at his impending death, and we seriously wonder, "God do you know what you're doing? Why do you let things like this happen to me, your faithful child?"

But it's then through the booming voice of God coming now from Holy Scripture, that we have to realize that we're looking for glory in all the wrong places. Just as Jesus' glory couldn't be seen through human eyes, but only through the eyes of faith, so it is with our glory. Our glory is simply that all the problems that happen in our life – all the difficulties that we have because we're Christians and then all the other problems that we experience as well – cause us to flee for comfort and for help to the Lord Jesus Christ. But again, that's something that we can't see with our human eyes. It's only when we look through the eyes of our faith that we can see that tribulation and hardship bring us closer to our Savior, and that is where the real glory is to be found.

And so today we come to the Lord Jesus, not so much asking him to make this world and our own lives glorious, but asking our Lord through Word and sacrament to strengthen the eyesight of our faith so that with it we can not only see the real glory of Christ on the cross which accomplished our salvation, but the real glory of our sufferings which draw us ever to our Savior and all the blessings that he provides. Amen.