

We Want to See Jesus

✠ **Through death to glory (vv.20-26)**

✠ **From judgment to grace (vv.27-33)**

In the name of Jesus, our glorious Savior, dear fellow redeemed:

One of the great blessings of being a pastor is getting to see people from the cradle to the grave. From the earliest moments when the nurse wraps up a bundle of joy to hand to new parents to the final hours when the nurses wrap up tired old feet and hands too old to warm themselves, all the useless trappings of this life fall away. What did that boat or vacation home mean to the old man who finally cannot carry his own weight to the bathroom anymore? How important is what the neighbors think when most are dead and gone? If all of us could see ourselves honestly, we'd confess with Job, "***Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart.***" (Job 1:21 NIV) Stripped of everything else, it's clear these Greeks in our text had it right: **We Want to See Jesus.** Dear friends, how else can we pass...?

✠ **Through death to glory (vv.20-28)**

Wouldn't America seem strange if you drove through farm fields and never saw any crops? No corn, no wheat, no soybeans or oats – just sacks of seed piled high in ditches where farmers failed to plant. More than strange, America would be hungry. Even the shiniest City Slicker knows there must be farms behind the bread, cereal and Chips Ahoy. Maybe we've grown so far off the farm, maybe even our farmers are so commercialized that to get fingers dirty planting seeds is lost on our American psyche. It may be why American mega churches feed on the attraction of an audience with theology a mile wide and an inch deep as long as the technology "rocks." Most of us don't even know someone who has ever washed the body of a dead loved one to plant it in the ground. We've sanitized everything from the cradle to the grave, leaving barely a clue that we must all pass **Through death to glory.**

Jesus was not so dull. From all eternity He could see the end of His winding path through life. Growing up with His mother Mary and stepfather Joseph in a carpenter's shop wouldn't be so bad. But Jesus knew it would not end there. Even after His miracles clamoring crowds would melt away when He told them they had to believe in Him to be saved. Raising His friend Lazarus from the dead would not free Him from the death threats of His own religious leaders. Envy would incense them to kill Lazarus along with Jesus. In only a matter of days the Palm Sunday throng would give way to "Crucify!"

Losing your job on the day you were diagnosed with a terminal illness, might give a feel for why Jesus had every right to give up in depression. Don't ever think He sailed through life without sadness and heartache. There's a reason why He spent so many hours offering up "***prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death.***" (Hebrews 5:7) This little incident with the Greek request for an audience must have been a real shot in the arm. It would be like getting a phone call on that dreadful day of loss saying that your invention had been accepted for production to save millions of lives. Jesus saw salvation spreading far beyond the tiny hundred-mile turf of His lifetime.

Do you remember Philip? Do you find yourself wondering why these foreigners went to him asking, "***Sir, we would like to see Jesus***"? The Holy Spirit does not explain why this opportunity was given to Philip. But it is interesting because Philip was the one who had earlier sought out Nathaniel (John 6:5f) and gave that classic answer to every unanswerable Evangelism question: "***Come and see.***" The Lord had obviously made Philip an approachable individual who would not try to argue someone into the kingdom of God. What a great lesson in trusting the dear Holy Spirit to provide not only the opportunity and the words to witness, but also the personality to help people who **Want to See Jesus.**

But before the **glory** of success Jesus had to pass **through** the trauma of **death**. His body would be the “**seed**” planted in the ground which would produce “**many seeds**,” countless sons and daughters of the Most High God by virtue of Christ’s innocent sacrifice in our place. Just one thing would stand in our way: Our unwillingness to follow Jesus **Through death to glory**. Once an unchurched neighbor of ours was kind enough to let me visit her in the hospital after she gave birth to a baby girl. But in the course of what to most women would have been an encouraging devotion, her eyes darkened. She flatly told me, “You know, I like my life the way it is.” At first I did not understand. But soon it became clear that I would never have another chance to tell her about Jesus. “I like my life,” was just a polite way of saying, “Get lost. I don’t really want to see this Jesus of yours.”

What will it take for us to **Want to See Jesus**? Only this: “*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.*” Another time Jesus said it this way: “*If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.*” (Luke 14:26) This hatred is real, not angry or malicious, evil-minded hatred, but the powerful, heartfelt rejection even of family ties if they get in the way of following Jesus to the cross. Not just dislike, but it is possible to love your mother as a mother, yet hate her if she comes between you and Christ. Peter, His lead disciple, Jesus called, “*Satan*” (Matthew 16:23) for trying to keep Him from 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*” – **Through death to glory...**

† **From judgment to grace (vv.27-33)**

Serving oneself is the sin for which we deserve to be judged by God. Our love for family and friends, our affection for the finer things of life is really no love at all. It’s cold hearted selfishness that comes directly between us and God. It dishonors God as if the things He gives to us, His creatures, are more important than He as our Creator. **Judgment** we deserve and **judgment** is all we would get if not for God’s **grace** that poured out from Jesus’ lips in this: “*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. Father, glorify your name!’*” *Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.”*

Jesus would not give up on God – not His work as God, nor His life and death struggle to bring glory to God by saving us poor sinners. Some *said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken*, but Jesus wants us to be very clear on this. We weren’t there. We don’t have a DVD, but we have something far better in the Word of God Himself to tell us, “*This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.*”

You and I deserve to have God’s Son just walk away and leave us to eternal condemnation for every time we’ve loved people and things more than God, for every time we’ve wanted to see someone else besides Jesus. But the old evil foe from hell who first brought these deadly desires of self-service into God’s creation has been convicted and condemned by Jesus’ death and resurrection. All our sins and rebellion were crucified with Christ who then rose from the grave without them. No one can escape eternal torment any other way than **Through death to glory** following Jesus. And all who want to be freed from the chains of sin and sadness in eternal hell will find complete relief **From judgment to grace** in the wounds of Him who was lifted above this earth on a cross that should have been ours.

God is not “fair” with us. Thank God He’s judged us in mercy and **grace** instead. God clothes our baby nakedness with His holy robes of righteousness in our baptism. And at the other end of life when skin and bones no longer can carry the clothes of this earth, Christ’s robe of holiness remains. **We Want to See Jesus** – for all eternity. In Him alone are life and peace and never ending joy. “*Glory be to Jesus, Who in bitter pains Poured for me the lifeblood From his sacred veins. Grace and life eternal In that blood I find; Blest be his compassion Infinitely kind.*” (CW 103:1,2) Amen.