

Church of Our Saviour
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

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The Fifth Sunday of Lent

March 21, 2021

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Text: John 12:20-33

Title: "We Wish to See Jesus"

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In the Name of (+) Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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God wants all people to come together! Can I say that Can we say that? And God uses any human situation to make that happen! We know that! We've seen that! And it is wonderful when it happens!

And, so when the Greeks came to Philip, and said, "We wish to see Jesus," Philip made it happen! He told Andrew! And Andrew told Jesus! It was theological matter that some, like me, love to talk about!

We know, Greeks are Greeks! We know Greeks honored philosophers! History tells us! They honored thinkers! They had high regard for scholars! And they had high regard for public forums where people talked, and listened, and exchanged ideas! Tragic in our day that we make fun of thinkers!

(PAUSE)

We may know the names of some of the Greek philosophers!! There was Epicurus who said, “Nothing is enough for those to whom enough is too little!” There was Plato who said, “We can forgive a child who is afraid of the dark, the real tragedy of life is when there are those who are afraid of the light!” There was Socrates who said, “Strong minds discuss ideas! Average minds discuss events! And weak minds discuss people!”

And, then there were the Jews! More common in nature! Farmers! Shepherds! Carpenters! Shop-keepers! And, the Greeks came to them! “We would like to see Jesus,” they said!

So, why Jesus? What did Jesus have for them? What words of wisdom? What style of living? What did the ministry of Jesus’ have for them? What did the love of Jesus for this whole world mean to them?

Maybe, like Jesus, they came to understand the need to feed the hungry! A song, the Magnificat, said that about him! Did the Greeks want to bring down the powerful from their thrones, too? Did they want to lift up the lowly and fill the hungry with good things, too? Maybe they too felt the need to send the rich away empty!

And so, Philip told Andrew, a fellow disciple, what the Greeks were asking! Andrew told Jesus! And, Jesus, speaking directly and frankly said what the Greeks needed to hear!

Maybe what Jesus finely, had to say were words few in any age want to hear! There is no easy religion, Jesus said! Few

want to hear that! Real religion, Jesus asserts, his religion comes by suffering, and sacrifice, and death!

The soul of Jesus was troubled, as he talked about suffering and sacrifice and death! It is time for judgment, Jesus said! It is time to drive evil out, he said! It is time to suffer and die! And, for me, that time is almost here! There is no way out of that! There was no safety net! There was no escape hatch to climb through!

His soul was troubled by what was happening all around! Bringing people together just wasn't happening! It didn't happen in his day! It isn't happening in our day! And, Jesus was troubled!

But, sometimes! Sometimes! What God wants! Happens! And, people of this world, the people he died for, come together! Even in hard, painful times they come together!

They came together, we saw it, we witnessed it, at the funeral several years ago of one sweet young girl named Elizabeth from our congregation in Sheboygan!

Family members were there! Barbara, the mother of Elizabeth! Born and raised in the Sheboygan, Sheboygan Falls area! Probably of German or Slovenian background! Jonas, father of Elizabeth! He was an Eskimo! Connected to a tribe very near the North Pole! Myrtle, grandmother of Elizabeth! Always with that family!

We had all worked hard together on various projects in our congregation, like sponsoring a Laotian family! Jonas, Barbara, Elizabeth, and Myrtle, rolled up their sleeves and went

to work with us, cleaning and painting a rental home for the Laotian family!

The marriage of Jonas and Barbara ended in divorce! Alcohol abuse, they said! Jonas went back to the Canadian far north, back to his tribe! Elizabeth, after attending faithfully our Sunday School and Weekday School was confirmed! She graduated from high school and went to New York City!

She went there to work and live! And there, Elizabeth died of an overdose in her apartment! There she had a circle of friends from all around the world! Many of them from New York came to her funeral! One of them! A young man from England, speaking for the rest of them, choking back tears, spoke at her funeral service!

Jonas wanted to take part her funeral service, too! According to Eskimo customs! He burned incense! He, singing with Eskimo relatives, chanted Eskimo songs! He took evergreen branches and them put into the hole before the coffin was lowered and on top of the coffin after the coffin was placed! All of us watched! And cried! So touching and beautiful! How we all came together that day! A year or so later, Barbara died! And, we could not believe it!

No matter if we are Greek! Or, Jewish! Or Eskimo! Or, young people from all over this world! No matter what our origins! No matter what our family! No matter what our language! No matter what color our skin! God gathers us together! It is God's will!

And, we can like one another! We can be patient with one another! We can talk about religion as the Greeks and Jews talked, recorded in today's Gospel Lesson! And, not get mad!

We can serve one another at times of human blessing and joy, and in times of human pain and sadness! We can love one another! Thanks be to God! AMEN