

The Christians' Lenten Demand, "We Wish To See Jesus."

Text: John 12:20-26

Suggested Hymns:

79T307, 54, 368, 51, 173

1) An overview of the text

2) Jesus Himself, In His Reality, In His Fullness

3) We, Every One For Himself And All Together

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 12:20–26, ²⁰ *Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast.* ²¹ *Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."*

²² *Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.* ²³ *But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.*

²⁴ *Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.* ²⁵ *He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.* ²⁶ *If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Lent commemorates the suffering of our Saviour. During Lent Christians everywhere in mind and in spirit enter into the closest fellowship with Jesus. Looking forward to the end of His earthly ministry, they think and speak of His crucifixion, death, and His resurrection, by which He delivered the world from sin's final consequence and proclaimed to it life and immortality.

Yes, during Lent Christians are preparing properly to celebrate Easter, their victory over sin, death, and the devil.

In order that we may properly celebrate Easter and its victory, we must see Jesus, know Him and His work, His person and His all-concerning accomplishment.

The Christian demand at this season therefore is identical with, that of the Greeks of our text, who, coming to Philip, said: “*Sir, we wish to see Jesus.*” Let us emphasise this fact as we consider The Christians’ Lenten Demand, “*Sir, we wish to see Jesus.*” May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. An Overview Of The Text

Jesus Christ came into the world for the whole world, for all nations. In our text there were some Greeks who were among the crowd of festival worshipers. They were probably converts to Judaism.¹

They singled out Philip from Jesus’ disciples and asked to see Jesus. Whether they chose Philip strictly at random, we don’t know. But Philip’s name was Greek, and he was from out of town (Bethsaida, in northern Galilee), so they may have felt more comfortable approaching him. Philip compared notes with Andrew first, and the two of them told Jesus.

“*We wish to see Jesus,*” the Greeks had said. As well as for themselves the request also represented the gentile nations and the fulfilment of the messianic promise that *The Gentiles shall come to your light* in Isaiah 60:3.

“*We wish to see Jesus*” reveals the desires of people impressed by God’s law and made aware of God’s Messiah. “*We wish to see Jesus*” is the spirit of Christians to this day who never stop searching the Scriptures to learn of Christ.

Until now, we have become accustomed to hearing that Jesus’ hour had not yet come.² But now it had. Jesus, the essence of humanity, had come to Jerusalem to die for lost humanity and rise again in glory. Jesus came to sacrifice Himself for the salvation of the Greeks as well as the Jews. His answer to the Greeks was, “*I have eternal life for you. Follow me.*”

What Jesus came to do He likened to a seed of grain. That seed remains nothing but a lonely seed unless it is planted. But when the seed is buried in the ground and dies there, a plant grows from it and bears fruit.

Similarly, Jesus would not bear the fruit of His mission from God unless He first died. All His miraculous signs had no eternal benefit without the miracle of the cross and the empty tomb. The Son of Man had to die for a spiritual harvest to come, the harvest of souls for eternity.

Jesus' dying would have its effect on all who follow Him. We too in a sense must die. We do not die as a substitute for others as Jesus did. But in believing in Him as our Substitute, we die with Him. We read in 2 Timothy 2:11, *"This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him."*

When Jesus warns against loving our lives, He means putting this earthly life first. It is a warning against self-centredness. Those who put all their affection on this life and what they can get out of it will one day die and lose it all.

When Jesus speaks of hating our lives in this world, He means putting Him and the life He gives first. When we believe in Jesus and have eternal life in Him, worldly living loses its attraction. Everything worldly carries sin's taint and becomes hateful.

Only in Jesus does the good life, eternal life, become ours. It would be better to lose this earthly life than to lose Jesus. We guard our spiritual lives when we follow Jesus.

Our faith in Jesus, however, carries a price. We are His servants. We must follow where He leads. We face sacrifices. We risk the scorn of many human beings. But we do so with the promise of the heavenly Father's honour and with praise and thanksgiving for His Son.

2. We Wish To See Jesus

Jesus Himself, In His Reality, In His Fullness.

During Lent, and really at all times, "*we wish to see Jesus*" Himself. Not some one's picture of Jesus, not some one's thoughts about Jesus, no matter how pious they all may be.

Where can we find Him? Jesus, especially during the days in which He was walking here on earth was found with His face set "*like a flint*"³ toward Jerusalem and His cross. Again and again Jesus reminded His disciples that all that was being done before their eyes was being done in order that Scripture might be fulfilled.

Therefore in the Scriptures we find the picture of Jesus that we wish to see. In the Scriptures are the thoughts that we wish to have engage our minds. In the Scriptures is where we find Jesus Himself, both in prophecy and in fulfilment.

Strange as it must seem, there is a wide-spread tendency in our days to see Jesus not as He is pictured in the Scriptures. In large circles that picture is often deliberately rejected.

Even in nominally Christian churches they say that there is no need to burden oneself with the detail of the gospels about Jesus; and that Jesus, if He Himself was with us today would not have us to be interested so much in His person, His wonderful deeds, His particular work, but that the all-important matter to Him would be this, that we absorb His spirit and live His life.

Accordingly, these nominally Christian teachers avoid the gospel records and the Jesus that they picture. Instead they invent another Jesus other than the One that has come to us in the Bible.

The thoughtful Christian will not fail to detect the variance of such false prophets in sheep's clothing from the Jesus who has called Himself the Good Shepherd. This Good Shepherd Himself has said in John 5:39, ... *search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.*

The thoughtful Christian will therefore not permit Himself to be led away from the Scriptures in His search for Jesus Himself. He knows that in the Bible he will find Jesus in His reality and in His fullness.

In the Scriptures, then, *we wish to see Jesus*. We want to see Him both in prophecy and in fulfilment; for Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, of Scripture. Deep down and everywhere He lies bedded in the Old Testament prophecies, and the New Testament reveals Him in all His fullness and glory.

We want to see Jesus especially with reference to the great fundamental facts that have been gathered and laid down in the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed.

Jesus Christ, God's Son, Mary's Son, our Lord, **was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

We want to see Jesus in that reality and fullness to which He refers in our text, saying: *“The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.”* Yes, we especially want to see Jesus in His suffering and death, in which He gives His life in order that we may live. O the glory that streams from Jesus’ cross! In it the Father, who so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son; in it the Son, who in love became obedient unto death, are revealed in appealing and overwhelming splendour.

The hymnist wrote,⁴

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an off’ring far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

3. Sir, We Wish To See Jesus We, Every One For Himself And All Together.

During Lent, and indeed at all time, *“we wish to see Jesus,”* every one for himself. Our religion is, after all, a very personal matter. It concerns us individually. It is a matter between God and each one of us singly.

Jesus has indeed once and for all times redeemed the whole world from its sin by His substitutionary atonement on Calvary. He is *the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*⁵ He has done it, He has finished the work. The whole world is redeemed.

However, this finished work must be preached, and made known to the individual for Scripture says in Mark 16:16, ¹⁶ *He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*

This finished work is offered to the individual in the Word, that the Scriptures and its preachers proclaim, and it becomes a very personal matter then. The individual must accept the offered grace, he must believe. Also the increase of faith is a personal matter. No one’s faith can increase by another’s application. It is always in proportion to our own spiritual sight.

The Christian Lenten demand therefore very properly is, *“We, that is, I myself, wish to see Jesus.”* Lent is a precious time of personal application to the review and the study of the Scriptures, of personal devotion in regular

contemplation of Jesus and His love, His words, and His Passion. Let us use it, saying, ***“We wish to see Jesus.”***

But we also wish to see Jesus in company with others. Like these Greeks, we have companions, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, of like mind with us. The common spiritual interests bind us together, and we wish to see Jesus in company, in the assembling of ourselves together.

What solemn memories are bound together in the lives of Christians with the *“sweet hour of prayer,”* when in one way or another the Holy Spirit descended upon all those that were gathered together like those disciples on that first Pentecost!

The Saviour’s solemn promise, ***“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them”***⁶ has never been a vain word. In accord with that, the rivers of strength have gone out into and through the groupings of Jesus’ disciples, so that the gates of hell have not prevailed against His Church.

Let us not overlook or minimise the fact that ***“faith comes by hearing.”***⁷ The regular and the special services of the church preach Jesus Christ. They reveal Him, and that is the place for all of us to be who wish to see Jesus and even more and more of Him.

We read in 1 Corinthians 1:21 that ***since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.***

Yes, we wish to see Jesus during this Lenten season all the time and even to the end in the company of our Christian brethren and friends; in the place where Jesus has promised to be with us and to reveal Himself. For in that sight of Jesus there is salvation.

We read in Isaiah 52:10, ¹⁰ ***The LORD has made bare His holy arm In the eyes of all the nations; And all the ends of the earth shall see The salvation of our God.***

And God says in Isaiah 45:22, ²² ***“Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.***

In this way we shall prepare for Easter. Seeing Jesus, seeing Him every one for himself, and all of us together, Jesus' victory shall be ours. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Acts 2:11; 6:5

² John 7:30; 8:20

³ Isaiah 50:7

⁴ Hymn 54

⁵ John 1:29

⁶ Matthew 18:20

⁷ Rom 10:17