

WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED!

HOLY CROSS SUNDAY

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John 12:20-30

Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine.

"Sir, we want to see Jesus." The request seems simple enough. But these men, wanting to see Jesus, were Greeks; they were unclean, they were Gentiles. The Word Greek and Gentile are interchangeable. And Gentiles or Greeks were considered unclean, unholy, they were unfit to come into contact with, to be associate with, to be interacted with, especially during this high feast time, of Passover. Yet they still request, **"Sir, we want to see Jesus."** They're not from just around the corner they had to travel to get there. These men have come a long way. Maybe they were converts to Judaism: Maybe they made pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship at the feast, to celebrate the Passover. They certainly would know the Old Testament prophecies and signs. Maybe they just witnessed Jesus' triumphal entry on Palm Sunday. And with their love for prophecy and signs, they wanted to see Jesus. So they pull Philip aside and say: **"Sir, we want to see Jesus."**

There's no record that these men ever met Jesus that day, but they will see Him by the end of the week. All of Jerusalem will see Him, hanging high on a cross where He's crucified: That exposure is part of the punishment. By then, the scourge will have flogged the Savior's back, and the Praetorian Guard will have beaten His face. He will be stripped and nailed to the wooden timbers. He will speak but a few times, and then He will breathe His last breath and die on the cross.

"Sir, we want to see Jesus." The Greeks will see Him, crucified, for it is there at the cross is where He draws people to Himself. But what will they think? Is it reasonable to think of this Man as the Savior? This man cannot save Himself from death how could He save others? That's logical, and the signs they see will confirm that rationale. God has worked powerful signs of salvation in the past: Think of the Lord meeting Moses on Mt. Sinai, or sending the consuming fire on Mt. Carmel. But here at Calvary, there's no such signs, just a mutilated man named Jesus dying on a cross, and few hours of darkness.

"Sir, we want to see Jesus," say the Greeks, and that's whom they'll see. The cross won't be a glorious sign, and it won't make sense to trust in Jesus, at least not yet. But we rejoice for these Greeks, and for ourselves, for the Lord does not leave us with only signs, or appearances or human logic. He gives us a far better gift, **"His Word."** While the cross appears to be an accursed tree that makes no sense, listen to what Jesus calls the cross as the Greeks endeavor to see Him.

He calls it glory: **"The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified."**(v. 22) Jesus is glorified in His death on the cross, and the Father's name is glorified by His Son's sacrifice! That tends to make very little sense to us, because we're use to the idea of human glory. A person finds glory when he is surrounded by abundant power, strength and prestige. When someone is glorious, he is victorious, he seems invincible, unbeatable. That's hardly the appearance of this beaten Man, Jesus, on the cross.

But God measures glory differently. God's glory is achieved by doing His will. Against all appearances, all human reason, all earthly logic. Jesus is glorified at the cross because He is fulfilling His promise to save us from sin. Jesus is glorified at the cross because He is fulfilling His Father's plan of salvation; He is dying the death of sinners so that sinners can be raised from death. We know this because the Lord says so. Don't look at the crucifixion with only your human sight, or human reason. In that picture the crucifixion has all the glory and glamour of a prisoner being led to the hangman's gallows; actually even less, because death row inmates aren't subjected to a merciless beating by the guards before they are executed. But be assured that the dark-shrouded hilltop outside of Jerusalem is a much more glorious mountain than Mt. Carmel or Mt. Sinai, for at Mt. Calvary, Jesus defeats sin, death and the devil. And He does it for you! If you want to see Jesus, look to His death on the cross.

Many churches have lost sight of the importance of that message, Christ Crucified. Instead their ministers preach social issues and do Bible studies on anything other than the Scripture, shame on them! God knew that would be a temptation and addressed that risk through St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:22 & 23: **"For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and foolishness to the Gentiles."**

There's a story told of a small English village that had a tiny chapel whose stonewalls were covered by ivy. Over an arch was originally inscribed the words of St. Paul: **"WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED"**. There had been generations of godly men who did just that: they preached Christ crucified. And many souls had been baptized and given the kingdom of God. But times changed. The ivy grew thick and soon it covered the last word. The inscription then read: **WE PREACH CHRIST**. Other men came and they preached Christ: Christ the example, Christ the humanitarian, and Christ the ideal teacher. The people were made to feel as though they needed to do something to earn their own salvation. As a result many souls heard a saving message based in works righteousness. As the years passed, the ivy continued to grow until finally the inscription read: **WE PREACH**. That generation did just that: they preached. They preached philosophy, the new morality, social activism, self-esteem psychology, and the innate goodness of all humanity. They preached just about everything but Christ crucified. The result was that many people felt themselves to be without the need of the Savior and, thus, many died in their sins.

But we must preach Christ crucified. We must preach Christ crucified first; we must preach Christ crucified foremost; and we must preach Christ crucified always! For don't you see, this is God's appointed means of keeping us safely in the Savior's hands. Accept no substitutes!

"Sir, we want to see Jesus." If you want to see Jesus just look to His cross. Jesus describes His cross as the planting of grain: **"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."** Planting a seed seems silly enough: Why would burying a dead grain benefit anyone? Yet every year, farmers and gardeners plant grain. Why? Because, by the miraculous will of God, one grain of wheat produces many grains of wheat, and thus the whole world is fed. Jesus declares that He is the grain of wheat to be planted; by His death, a harvest of saints beyond calculation will be raised up for eternal life. Indeed, St. Paul calls the risen

Lord **"the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep,"** and declares that He will raise up His people on the Last Day (I Cor. 15:20, 23).

Every year Farmers plant grain with confidence because they've seen the results. They've seen more than a bit of grain buried into the dirt. They have hard evidence that a planted grain will yield much wheat. When Jesus is "planted" on the cross, there is no sign of life at His death. But three days later, He will be raised from the dead-the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. Thus, the world has proof of resurrection; however, many in the world still deny that this ever happened. Because people don't rise from the dead every day, it seems like foolishness. But you know better!

Finally, Jesus calls the cross a judgment: **"Now is the judgment of this world."** This part is logical: It makes sense. Judgment often means condemnation, and a man is judged by his actions. Logically, it only makes sense that the cross would condemn the world. Man takes God and puts Him to death, death on a cross. You would think that would earn God's wrath forever.

But the cross isn't about logical consequences; it's about salvation. Jesus is speaking of His Father's plan of salvation, not the condemnation that mankind deserves. Listen to more of the verse: **"Now is the judgment of the world; now the prince of this world will be driven out"** The "prince of this world"? the devil, the Accuser of old. He is called the Accuser because of his history, in the Old Testament. In Job 1 and Zechariah 3, the devil goes before the Lord and accuses Job and Joshua the high priest, pointing out their sinfulness: "You can't love these men, Lord, because here is a list of their sins. Therefore, they are guilty as charged. They belong to me, and I will see to their death and torment." The devil tries to accuse you too, before the Lord; but you see he's lost his power; he lost it at the cross. Why? Because Jesus has been crucified for the sins of the world. He has atoned for them all, including yours. **"Therefore, there is no more condemnation for those in Christ Jesus"** (Rom 8:1).

"Sir, we want to see Jesus." If you want to see Jesus just look to the cross, just look to your baptism. Paul says in Galatians 3:27 **For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.** When you were baptized Christ was put on you. You received the robes of righteousness. **"Therefore, there is no more condemnation for those in Christ Jesus."** When God looks at you He sees Jesus. For in baptism you have been joined to Christ's death, to His cross, you have also be joined to His resurrection (Rom 6:3-5)

If you want to see Jesus, just look to your baptism, for through it, Christ Jesus lives in you. And when Christ lives in you, you can know beyond a shadow of doubt that all your sins are forgiven. If you want to see Jesus, look to the Lord's Supper. For there (point to the altar) Jesus is present for you. Present in, with and under the bread and wine. His body and blood truly locally present for you to feast upon for the forgiveness of sins. He is the atoning sacrifice for you. **"Sir, we want to see Jesus."** and you have and you will, for through these means, through Jesus all your sins are forgiven because of His (†) death upon the cross, in the name of the Father and of Son and of the Holy Spirit. For Jesus sake and in Jesus name, Amen and Amen!

And now the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, now and forevermore. AMEN!