

DRAWING ALL PEOPLE TO LOVE

Lord of the new covenant, in Christ you draw all people to yourself: may we die with him to the powers of hate and let him show us a world loved by you, through Jesus Christ, the fruitful grain. *From Prayers for an Inclusive Church, Steven Shakespeare*

THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

JEREMIAH 31:31-34, PSALM 119:9-16, HEBREWS 5:5-10, JOHN 12:20-33

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ST. MARK'S-IN-THE-VALLEY

EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND PRESCHOOL

Los Olivos, California

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THE GOSPEL READING: JOHN 12:20-33

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say – 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that 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 standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Many of us will have heard this week about the collapse of a pedestrian bridge onto a busy roadway in Florida.

I watched a video of the incident captured by a dashboard camera installed in a large commercial truck as it approached the bridge. The truck was in eight lanes of traffic, very near the bridge when it fell.

In the video one sees all of the traffic in front of the truck come to an immediate and abrupt halt, the scene freezes, but just for a moment. Suddenly, in a split second, nearly all the car doors of the vehicles in front of the truck fly open, drivers leap out, and start running. But where?

They don't run away from the disaster; they immediately run *into* the mayhem in front of them to

help however they can.

Here technology helps us see ourselves, see our humanity more clearly. Ordinary people with no warning or preparation....

In today's gospel reading, Greeks come to Philip saying, "...we wish to see Jesus."

Of course they did.

And so do we.

And so we do.

We do see Jesus day by day by day in ways we overlook or dismiss... and occasionally recognize... and in which we participate.

So there, in that bridge collapse video was not one or two, but a number of people running into human disaster. Call it Christmas. Hear the words of Jesus: "I assure you that unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it can only be a single seed. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their lives will lose them, and those who reject their false selves in this world will keep their true lives forever. (CEB, adapted)

Jesus comes to us again and again... and again.

We see Jesus. We are Jesus.

Jesus who is eternally human and sacred. Jesus who repeatedly announced, not his ego, one human in now ancient days, but the perpetual and immediate presence

of the living God in the lives of the entire human family and in the creation.

Jesus says that all people are drawn into this love as he releases his hold on his particular, physical life. To see him is now to **be** a human being truly alive with self-giving love.

The life of Jesus was never about Jesus.

We know, then, not to over-focus on the Jesus of days gone by, Jesus on a pedestal, but to attune our minds, our hearts, our actions, our relationships, our movement in the environment to seeing Jesus constantly. This is gift we have of the risen life of Christ.

We are not adherents of a tradition immobilized in an institution, passively ascribing to a set of propositions penned by a committee in the past.

No, when the car stops, we throw open the door and run. The divine life, the sacred compassion in the world is full of movement, energy, adaptation, transformation and it is in us, with us, among us for the world God so loves.

See Jesus who loves us into loving as he loves.

Today, to see Jesus, this simple request, we see Jesus who continues to live and love and act in our world. Jesus who continues to open new ways to move through a

world that is too often bent on violence, destruction and death – what the powers that killed Jesus intended to be the end of his story.

Fr. Richard Rohr has written about the death of Jesus showing God’s love and said: “Jesus did not come to change the mind of God about humanity (it did not need changing)! Jesus came to change the mind of humanity about God.” Have our minds changed?

Also, he points out: “We all need to know that God does not love us because we are good. God loves us because God is good. Nothing humans can do will ever decrease or increase God’s eternal eagerness to love.”

So it is worth saying what we know in our experience: that the fullness of divine life and love live (scandalously, improbably, and ironically) side-by-side with all of our limitation, loss, failure, confusion, doubt, fear, animosity – all of our human vulnerability that threatens, again and again, to block out our vision of all of God in all of us and in the natural world.

As the story unfolds Jesus gives a new commandment – that

we love one another as he loves us, even if we are not all that good at loving.

The love of God is persistent – that’s why we will be celebrating at Easter.

And each of the services of Holy Week is intended for each of us to **see Jesus**, to see that Jesus *then* is Jesus *now*, to relive with Jesus *now* these times of his life so we can make the connection clearly in our lives and in the life of the world *now*. I invite each of you to interrupt your regular schedule to be present for each of these once-a-year occasions starting with Palm Sunday next Sunday – and continuing on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, each of those days at 7 pm, and at our Easter services, the richest being the Easter Vigil at 8 pm on Easter Eve.

In the world as it is, “we wish to see Jesus” is not a matter of curiosity, but one of survival for many people, including us.

Whatever we are as a Christian faith community, let’s be sure “we wish to see Jesus” – reveals God’s eagerness to love in what we **do** in our lives.



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