

“We Wish To See Jesus” – Rev. Jennifer Adams
Lent 5B – March 29, 2009

Here we are the last Sunday before Palm Sunday so the readings are getting more obviously difficult, and challenging. There is talk of the cross now, and glorification and dying; there is mention of the judgment of this world and a metaphor about a grain of wheat falling into the earth in order to live again. Jesus is to the point of saying to his disciples that “Now is the time” and even people new to the faith know where this story is headed. Just around the corner there is a cross, a trial, shouts of “crucify him” and the most mysterious and powerful image of the Messiah we have. And we are invited to be in this with him, to mourn, to wonder, to reflect, to pray.

And so the phrase I want to ask us to take from the gospel today is really something like a prayer, the request that came from the Greeks. It was a simple sentence offered at the very beginning of the gospel passage. Do you remember what they said to Phillip? “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.’” And that was it. And Phillip went and told Andrew and together they went and told Jesus. And that’s when Jesus said that the time was now.

And what I believe about this is that really, the time is always now, when “seeing Jesus” is our request. But I also think it’s one of the bravest requests we can make and these next couple of weeks show us that. “We wish to see Jesus” might have been an innocent request at the time, but look where it took them. Look where it takes us.

It takes us lots of places, some of which if we knew what we were getting into we might not have asked for to begin with. “Seeing Jesus” takes us to people different than ourselves. It takes us deep into our own hearts, our searchings our longings, our losses, our loves. Really “seeing Jesus” takes us to the hurting of the world and the truly faithful of the world; it takes us to a shared meal and it leads us to do things we wouldn’t otherwise imagine doing like washing one another’s feet, wiping one another’s tears, and embracing the un-embraceables of the world. To really make this our prayer means to open ourselves into the fullness of the story – and this is the challenge and grace of the next couple of weeks – to “see Jesus” means to see the cross and resurrection and the many, many ways in which those graces enter our lives and enter our world each and every day.

The truly beautiful and somehow also very humbling reality, is that while we tell these stories based on the liturgical calendar the time is always now for us to see the Christ. The time is always now for Christ to die and to rise, to feed us, to invite us into ourselves and to bring us out of ourselves among the many “one-anothers” that we are; the time is always now for us to see Jesus, for Christ to heal us to resurrect us and to send us forth.

And so, I invite you to make this your prayer. It's a good time of the year to practice. It's one of the bravest prayers you can pray, but we'll do it together. And in our prayer there will be grace.