

Reading: John 12:20-36

Theme: ‘Sir, we would see Jesus’

When we have been on holiday with the children and grandchildren, the grandchildren have made lists of what they want us all to do – especially in Whitby! Children can easily make lists - presents they’d like for Christmas or birthdays. Others can make wish lists on places like Amazon, or lists of what they’d like to be doing this time next year or in 5 years time.

In our reading we had the wish list of some people. It is on what we call Palm Sunday and the city of Jerusalem has been stirred and excited by Jesus’ triumphal entry. There was a buzz, an excitement in the air – even though it catalysed the Pharisees’ determination to kill Jesus, the general buzz was excitement. In the midst of all this were some Greek proselytes – Greeks who had converted to Judaism and they went to Philip and v21 (NIV) *“Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.”* or *“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”* (ESV, NAS, NKJ & RSV also literal translation) or *‘Sir, we would see Jesus.’* (AV). What a great desire, a great wish to have. All they’d seen and probably heard had stirred up their curiosity to check things out about this Jesus for themselves; to spend time with Him and see if what had been chanted and said was true. Was He worth worshipping and praising as He had been that morning? Perhaps someone listening or watching is curious about this Jesus; you may have heard of Him often, perhaps all your life, but you want to know is He worth learning about and worth following? I hope this message helps in that and also reminds us, who feel He is worth learning about and following, of how worthy He is and why we are to praise and thank Him. I want us to take their desire and note 4 things from it:

1. It is Reasonable

For **these Greeks** it was a reasonable thing to desire. They wanted to check Him out, to see if He was kosher, the real deal and not another nutter from the hill country out to deceive the people and spark trouble with the Romans. They wanted to know of Him and

to know Him. You can know of people who are famous, want to meet them, but when you do, they can be very disappointing and disillusion you as they are not nice people. These Greeks wanted to check this Jesus out – it was reasonable.

For **us here** it is also a reasonable thing to desire. Whether or not we are a Christian, we can desire and ask that we see Jesus. Not literally as those Greeks did, but as we learn of Him from the historical records written about Him – the Bible. You may say ‘*Don’t you mean the NT?*’ No, I mean the Bible, including the OT. The OT has pictures, types, prophecies, rituals and personalities that all point on to Jesus Christ – who He is, what He’d do and all He’d accomplish. One book I have read is ‘*Preaching Christ in All Scripture*’ by Ed Clowney. It is worth reading—1st chapter on Christ in all of Scripture; 2nd on Preparing a sermon that presents Christ in sermons and then 13 chapters of sermons that illustrate this in practise. But Christ is there in OT. On the 1st Easter Sunday evening, in Luke 24:25 -27, we read “*He said to them "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*”

This Luke reference highlights the view Jesus Himself had of the OT and when you consider that the apostles and early church preached and showed Jesus from the OT, we need to review our view of Christ in the OT & see Him pictured and portrayed there in so many ways (*the promised seed of Eve, of Abraham, as the one wrestling with Jacob, typified by Joseph in so many ways, as the Angel of the Lord appearing to Moses, as the pillar of cloud that led the people of Israel, as the Rock struck by Moses, as the brass serpent lifted up in the wilderness, as the fulfilment of the perfect presence of God in the tabernacle – for He tabernacled among us and we beheld His glory, as the fulfilment of all the types of the sacrifices, as the One who*

appeared to Joshua and so we could go on through the OT, let alone clear references to Him in the prophets – Isaiah 9 or 53; Micah 5:2 or the references to Him in the Psalms.)

Do we desire to see Jesus in both OT & NT? Do we read the OT? If so, is it reasonable to desire and pray ‘*Lord, I would see Jesus*’? This would expand our view of Him, our appreciation of Him as Christians and give us fresh insights and refresh our praise. It is reasonable to desire this; but as has already been hinted at

2. It is Requested

These **Greeks** went and asked, requested Philip that they would see Jesus. The word is a strong word – translated here as ‘request’ or ‘desire’ or ‘ask’ in different versions; but it is also translated in other parts as ‘beg’ or ‘beseech’. It is an intense form of ask, request. It hints at seriousness in their request – that they would not be put off – so Philip told Andrew and they both told Jesus. Here was a serious request by these Greeks – this was their desire that they should see Jesus.

Is it ours? You are watching this – perhaps with a little interest or curiosity as to what we are about in this church; even a curiosity or interest in this Jesus, but is it more of a passing fad or phase in your thinking? Perhaps you want some sort of help in your life and a crisis that is happening and you hope going to a church service online is a way to get help, strength or direction in this crisis. Yes, we will try and help, will try and answer your questions concerning Jesus, but the important thing is to realise that you must seriously desire and request to ‘see’ Him – see His relevance to your life in 2021, in the heart breaking, even gut-wrenching circumstances you may be in.

It is not come to Jesus and all will be well and sorted out. We need to seek Him seriously and with all our heart for Who He is in and of Himself – that He is God the Son, the awesome One, who is not as a lucky charm or some celestial lottery win, but the One to whom we

must bow the knee in total submission, own His rule in our life, own the mess we've made of our life toward Him, before even considering the mess we are in or we have made to those around us and ask Him to receive us and make us His child and be prepared for Him to break our heart and pride if He sees fit to do so. To seriously request to 'see Jesus' means we are prepared to see our own life in the light of His staggeringly awesome Being – that He is so awesomely big and we are worthless rebels and enemies and are prepared to be flattened by the enormity of the realisation that we can know His forgiveness, love and help when we do not deserve it and do not have any claim on Him at all.

Those of us who are Christians – is this our request? Not mouth the words or say 'Yes' glibly, but desperately want, long and desire in our hearts and lives to see of the Lord Jesus as we, as individuals, read our Bibles (OT & NT!); as we hear of Him in the services and sing His praise – as we want to draw near to Him and see Him together (note it is Greeks not a Greek wanted to see Him – there is a corporate aspect of worship and our meeting together). We can learn of His love and care for us and be really encouraged as we behold that, as it is impressed with force and sweetness into and upon our lives. That is wonderful – as it is to also see Him as the One who understands all we feel; He sympathises with us and prays for us – what a comfort and encouragement that we have such a Friend in Jesus!

Yet do we want to see Him as the holy, holy, holy One of Isaiah's vision – for that is who he saw - and feel our sin, failures and faults as something of His penetrating pure holiness blazes into our shabby little lives? That is not so comfortable, but is very disturbing. What if we see Him as the One who is leading us deliberately through dark valleys of pain, suffering, loss, even bereavement or who will move us on from one place to another! Do we want to or are we prepared to see Him then?

This Jesus is not a cosy domesticated Jesus for our own convenience – He is the awesome One, the glorious One, the disturbing One, the One before whom the beloved apostle John on seeing Him and His glory, fell down as a dead man. Views of Jesus in the sight of a believer can humble us to the dust, but also, even at the same time, cause our love and souls to soar in love, praise and adoration of this glorious One.

Do we still want our heartfelt serious request as individuals to be ‘I would see Jesus ‘? It has to be – for only He can do us good.

3. It is Required

For these **Greeks** nothing else would do. They were not content with Philip or Andrew and I doubt if Peter would have done. They required that they saw Jesus above all else. This was their purpose and aim in their requesting, beseeching, begging.

OK what about us listening or watching? We may be doing so with questions, doubts about Christianity and Christ. Can I encourage us not to be fobbed off with religion, with a sense of nice place and nice people – yes, we have a nice building here and I think we are nice people in the church! We are not saying be like us and live as we live, but seek the Lord Jesus as your own Saviour – see Him as the only Saviour and make Jesus yours by trusting Him.

If we are Christians then **require all who minister** here in the church to show you Jesus – not a tag on comment from a passage, but show how this points us to, links us to Christ and all He is and has done and will do for us. If the preachers lift up Christ and shows us of Him, His beauty, grace, love, care, power, help, strength and a whole host of other wonders about Him, then they would have done us good, especially as they **apply** these things to our lives.

Those who preach here are required to make sure we let the people see Jesus – not just facts or grand sentiments, fine sermons, or grand

theology – as important as these are, but how it impacts on, applies to and works out in our lives as it shows us of Jesus – e.g. if preaching on Jesus going to Jairus’ daughter and being delayed by the woman with the issue of blood in Mk 5 or Luke 8; we could stress His wisdom in delays and His power and control over situations – all true, but how about His reversing of world orders and priorities – the important male synagogue ruler is seemingly snubbed for an insignificant unclean, helpless woman and show how Jesus still has time for the outcasts, the downtrodden, the ones with little standing in society, the no-hopers of this world. Yes, His power is revealed in raising Jairus’ daughter from the dead, but so is His tenderness as He says in Aramaic "*Talitha koum!*" (which means, "*Little girl, I say to you, get up!*"). – the Aramaic is very tender '*Lambkin wake up*' or as someone said '*Honey its time to wake up!*' Suddenly it is not only a mighty miracle, but the gentle tenderness of Jesus is seen. We can apply that to our Saviour’s care of us and what the resurrection will involve for all of God’s people, a gentle tender wakening up by this lovely Saviour and that this One cares for us now in our lives and situations.

I listened to a preaching course one summer. The 1st point was '*The Goal of The Sermon – Lift Up Christ*' and it earthed this by speaking of an African-American church where an elderly lady if she felt the sermon is not exalting Christ, but was more of a lecture, or a pep talk she began to call out '*Get Him up! Get Him up!*' Great advice for all preachers. Some pulpits, in Wales have on the lectern of the pulpit a label printed out quoting John 12v21 '*Sir, we would see Jesus.*' Pray that I and all who preach here would '*Get Him up*' and all see Jesus in our ministry - which is my aim as I preach. To show, lift up Jesus is to be our goal and aim as a church and individual Christians and do so at every opportunity that arise or we are able to make.

4. It is Revealing.

For these **Greeks** their reasonable request received a strange answer from Jesus v23ff. Jesus pointed these and the crowd around (v29) to His being glorified – not as a mighty political or military conqueror of the Romans, but as one who would die, The One who was and would be troubled, who would be lifted up from the earth and draw all people to Himself. Jesus was speaking of being glorified by His death on the cross. His glory wasn't tied into public praise and approval, fame or the adulation of the crowds – like some 1st century X-factor winner, but He as the Son of man – an OT title and depiction of Him in Daniel 7:13ff – that depicts His glory and ability to approach the Ancient of Days and be given authority, glory and sovereign power and the worship of all nations. These Greeks are given a startling revelation of the true person and work of this Jesus they wanted to see – He showed them something of who He really is and what He would accomplish.

For some listening, watching, you may think this Jesus is just another good man and teacher, a great one at that, even some kind of prophet whose teaching is somehow relevant for modern life, but if that is the case you **dishonour** Him. The Bible and most clearly the NT reveals Him as fully God, equal with God who took a real human body and lived among us – not just to impress and awe us, but to identify with us and become the once and for all sin offering to allow us to be right with God. The glory of Jesus is unavoidably tied into the cross and all He suffered there to reconcile us to God. Until you see, recognise this, then no matter what honour or title you give to Jesus you have not seen Him as He needs to be seen.

Once you know it was for you He did this and you come to trust Him as your own Saviour then you'll realise that the Bible reveals Him as so much more than just an eternity and heaven insurance policy. As **Christians** we are to keep on seeing more of Jesus and wanting more of Him revealed to us. To see more of all He suffered to save us is humbling, stunning and yet so wonderful – that the glorious One of Heaven should leave all that to die to save us. We'll see of the

wonder of His Person and Being while He lived a real life, in a real family, with real life situations, that He really was tempted to the uttermost to sin and yet He didn't sin. Because of that He can sympathise with us and knows sin's alluring power, He understands us when we fall and fail. He is not a hard, unfeeling or uncaring Saviour; we'll see He is altogether lovely. He is our example par excellence and He shows us, challenges how to live, but we realise we need His help because we will fail.

We need to know He has saved us and made us perfectly clean for ever and He is helping us live that out. We can't go against the Goliaths of our sin and problems - but He, David's greater Son, took them all on and defeated such and we are alive in Him. When we see He is now enthroned in Heaven, at God's right hand and we have direct access to Him in prayer and He ever lives to make intercession for us and has sent His Spirit into our lives to help and strengthen us too, then we should be encouraged and realise He will never leave us or forsake us, for He really and truly loves us now in all we are going through and experience in our lives.

We need to have revealed to us more of His glory as the conquering King – in control of history – that of the world and of our lives too. See Him as revealed in the book of Revelation (Apocalypse = a revealing) – it centres on and reveals Jesus and what a sight of Jesus it reveals to us; there is so much to help and encourage us there. See Him revealed as the One who will end time and come back and call all His people out of their graves and this world.

As Christians we have every reason to make our prayer, as individuals and as a church, the reasonable request and requirement for revelation of Jesus 'we would see Jesus', because only He can satisfy and do us true and lasting good. Incredibly one day this prayer will be most fully answered and we shall see Him as He is and be like Him – but that is another thrilling subject!