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Preaching: Rev. Eunbae Doh

“We Want to See Jesus”

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.

I thought it’s spring. When I drive to go somewhere with my family, my son is always asking the same question after 5 minute we started, “Dad, are we there yet.” It’s really annoying. Now I’ve found myself grumbling like my son, “God, are we there yet?” Blood is thicker than water.

The story for today is in the city of Jerusalem. It is Passover time, and hundreds of thousands of people were gathered in Jerusalem. Imagine, thousands of people coming into downtown of Saint Charles from all over the Chicago land for the Scarecrow Festival. That’s the way it was for Passover, with hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world crammed into the city of Jerusalem.

They would come from as far away as Persia, Syria, Egypt, Greece and Rome. And this is the setting of our text today. John says, verse 20-21

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.’

How did they come to Jesus? They were not Jews. They were Gentile travelers. We can find the answer in verse 17-18

Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him.

That's right. They heard some great stories about Jesus like many other people. But a story is just a story. They might want to see Jesus to know who this man really was.

And so they approached Philip because he has a Greek name or even spoke Greek and asked him "Can we see Jesus?" Philip went to Andrew and the two of them went to Jesus and said: "There are two Greeks who want to see you."

Now you think that Jesus would have answered them directly, but he didn't. There is no record or any indication that Jesus met the Greeks or gave some nice word or any welcome message. He just said, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it will remain a single seed. But if it dies, it will produce many grains of wheat. For whoever will find his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will find it. If anyone would serve me, they must follow me. They must follow me in death "

That's a weird answer!!! Wasn't that weird? Come on Jesus, you are not supposed to say that. That was not the point. They were not talking about how to serve you, how to follow you. They just wanted to see you. How do ordinary people make any big decision following someone without knowing who he is.

Come on, Jesus, don't go too far. They are not ready yet. First, you need to have some time to get to know each other if you really want to make them your people.

Think about this. If you meet a beautiful woman at a party and say things like "I think I like you. I am not rich. But I have a job. I have a small ranch home. I want to have three children... and so on. What's going to happen? You would never see her again.

I think we may think about two things, why Jesus said it like that.

First, it's too late. Jesus had no time. It was only six days before he was to die. He didn't have time to have new people, teaching them, making them his disciple.

Second, that weird saying was his answer to the request of their wish; we want to see Jesus. I think Jesus was telling them the answer.

In 2007 Willow Creek Community Church released its findings from a multiple year study of its ministry. Basically, they wanted to know what programs and activities of the church were actually helping people mature spiritually and which were not. The results were published in a book, *Reveal: Where Are You?*

The research revealed that “Increasing levels of participation in these sets of activities does NOT predict whether someone’s becoming more of a disciple of Christ.

Bill Hybels, senior pastor of Willow Creek church, summarized the research this way:

“Some of the stuff that we have put millions of dollars into thinking it would really help our people grow and develop spiritually, when the data actually came back, it wasn’t helping people that much.”

Having spent thirty years creating and promoting a multi-million dollar organization driven by programs and measuring participation, and convincing other church leaders to do the same.

Bill Hybels confessed: “We made a mistake.”

We spent so much time, energy, and money. But we failed to make them disciple of Jesus.

There are so many people coming to church, our church, Willow Creek Church, or any other church like the people, the Greeks in the today’s Bible story wishing to see Jesus. How can we respond to their request? We have invited them to many excellent programs, activities, worship. But are we really sure we have given them what they really want, knowing Jesus?

All those kind of programs and church activities: attending worship, reading the Bible, praying, serving others, help us to know Jesus in some degree but not 100%. Through all those kind of things, we can be more spiritual, we can be more sensitive to God, but we would not able to say that we know Jesus unless we die like Jesus. If we don’t want to die, we never know who Jesus is.

Let’s hear what Jesus tells us.

He said, *“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.”*

Honestly, our Christian journey is a battle between these two opposite sides, remaining and dying. Jesus also struggled with that issue, remaining or dying even at the end of his life. In the night before he was arrested as he was praying and asking God, saying, “Father, take this cup from me.”

Remaining or dying. It does not mean just our physical death. We are having same challenges in our daily life. When we are treated badly, when we are angry, when someone we loved hurts us, betrays us, there is a whispering voice deep inside our heart, “Hey you don’t have to die, that’s not your fault. Don’t be a big loser. Go and get it” But also sometimes we hear a deep concerning voice from our heart saying “Why are you afraid of dying? Don’t you see me? I died for you.”

Jesus invites us to follow him, actually an invitation to die. We have received this invitation in our daily life, at home, at school and at work place. Can you die for me? Can you die for your neighbor, can you die for church even though you will be losing something important, your reputation, your pride, your dignity, your time and gift, even though you will be forgotten.

If you are ready, here is the good news for you.

“Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”

If you die, you will live. Saint Paul knew this secret as he said in his letter to the Galatians 2:20

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”

Let me sing one of my favorite Christian songs,

Christ in me is to live

To die is to gain

Amen.