

Come and See: Asking Jesus in John, Pt. 6
Sir, We Wish to See Jesus
John 12: 20-26

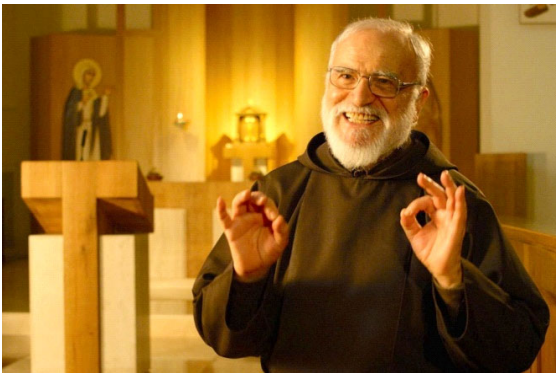
**First Presbyterian Church
AD 2023
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Dawson**

Palm Sunday, April 2,

Gerrit Scott

This is the moment when the Jesus movement went global. Some Greek travelers ask the disciple Philip if they can get some time with Jesus. It's Passover week. People have come from all over Israel for the annual celebration of the LORD I AM's mighty acts of saving his people from slavery and sin. The Passover festival had become a world attraction. These Greeks had come all the way across the Mediterranean Sea. They are spiritual explorers. They have enough money to travel, enough education to be curious about the gods of other people, and enough confidence to ask to see the man of the hour. For all Jerusalem is buzzing about how Jesus had raised the man named Lazarus from the dead. Then he rode into the city while tens of thousands waved palms and hailed him as the King. The Greeks want to meet this Jesus.

So they ask Philip, the disciple with a Greek name. "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." This seems a lovely thing to ask. We are not indifferent. We are seekers. We'd like to meet this man who says and does such extraordinary things. Maybe Jesus is the missing piece for which we have been searching. Can you connect us?
Can you get us in front of him?



I've felt this way throughout my life when I've admired someone. I'd like to meet him. For years now, I've

wanted to thank Raniero Cantalamessa for being my pastor through his writings. Hey, it seems like it could happen. After all, surely a Catholic cardinal in Rome who preaches to the pope is eagerly waiting for a Presbyterian pastor from Louisiana to make an appointment!



Lately, I'd like to meet Jonathan Roumie, the actor who portrays Jesus in *The Chosen*. I could tell you I'd like to talk to him about faith and acting. But truthfully, I just want him to hug me, then look at me with those Jesus-eyes and tell me how much God loves me. Two minutes, that's all!

Sir, we wish to see Jesus. Another way to say it is "We desire to experience Jesus for ourselves. We'd like to encounter him in a personal conversation. Can you put us together for an hour?"

So Philip tells Andrew and the two go together to tell Jesus. These guys from Greece want to see you. This strikes Jesus like a match. A key moment has come. The prophecies that Israel's Messiah would draw the whole world to himself have started to come true. It's happening. Jesus has gone global. Jesus says, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. The moment is here. The world has arrived and I will now be lifted up." This sounds like a great story for Palm Sunday. Jesus, we see you! We hail you as King. You are the one we've been seeking.

Clearly Jesus did not have a great marketing manager. Because, from a trending likes, thumbs up, seize the moment point of view, Jesus makes a colossal blunder. The world is ready to hail me as king? Let me tell give you a little word picture.



Take a single grain of wheat. It won't fill up your belly.

And it won't multiply by itself. You've got to plant that wheat grain if you want to get a plant that will give you enough grain to eat. This little wheat grain sort of has to die. You bury it in the ground like a body. You cover it over with dirt. You let it go. Then you wait. In a little while, an amazing thing happens. The husk of that grain of wheat falls away. It will never be the same. A little wheat shoot comes out and pushes through the ground.



In a few months, a wheat stalk grows and matures. The stalk is full of grain, either to eat or to multiply. That one little grain when planted gives rise to much grain. But it doesn't just happen. The grain has to die to living a solitary, independent life sitting on a table. It has to be buried in the ground in order for new life to arise. That's how Jesus said it would be with him. "I'm going to be lifted up. I'm going to be glorified. But not first in triumph and exaltation. First I have to be lifted up on the cross to die. Then I will have to be buried, sealed in the cave, lost to you. Only then, through death, will my life multiply within a multitude of disciples. And the

same is true for you. If you love your life now, you will lose it. What I mean is that if you want to be solitary, independent, protected in yourself, living for yourself, you will never find real life. You will always be frustrated. Joy will elude you. The life you want will always be just out of reach. But if you give your life over to me, you will find it. When you release control, you will discover my guidance. When get tired enough of yourself to hate being a single grain, and die to your sin and self-centeredness, then you will rise in joyful, fruitful life. That's just the deal. Buried. Then fruitful. Dying to self. Then rising in me."

We don't ever learn if the Greeks got to meet Jesus. That's actually irrelevant. An hour with Jesus will do nothing for you if you're just shopping for spirituality. If you're just curious but not serious, you won't ever see Jesus for who he is, even if he's right in front of you. If you demand to be you, on your own, an independent grain, always the one in charge of you, your heart will stay isolated. The life of Jesus will not flow in you. Church will be boring. Jesus will be baffling. Anger over the stupidity in the world and the way people treat you will eat your lunch every day. You will be allowed the illusion that your life is yours. But you will one day discover in horror that your ownership of your life was ever *only* an illusion. God claims you, and you have missed him entirely.

But if we will follow Jesus in his path, joined to him, we will learn to die to ourselves a bit every day. I looked for so long to be fulfilled in getting everything arranged to suit me. But, one, that's impossible. And two, even when I could get close, my way is not really what makes for life. Rather, giving your life to others is the path to life. Serving brings joy. Expending energy for another releases an internal energy of liveliness inside. We connect to Jesus as we offer our lives to him, dying with him to self-centered will. Once for all for salvation. Every day as he takes us deeper into his transforming life.

This dying that leads to rising, this going down in giving away life in order to foster new life is the model for all those who believe into Jesus. We enter the life-pattern of Jesus' own faithfulness. Bible scholar Lesslie Newbigin sparkles here as he writes, "The pattern of living through dying" is "a life which is not guarded and preserved but forever thrown away, yet it is a life constantly received as a fresh gift from the source of all life, in whose

eternally outpoured love it has the assurance that death has lost its dominion” (Newbigin, 156-7).

Sir, we wish to see Jesus. That’s a lovely thing to say. But questions have to be asked in reply. Do you wish to see Jesus as a tourist or a disciple? Do you want to see Jesus as a detached observer, or will you submit your life to him? Do you demand that you stay independent and solitary, always in control, or will you risk dying with him? Will you let your ego be buried in order that you might rise in a new life of love and giving and worship? Knowing the path Jesus had to follow, knowing the path he calls you to follow if you would be joined to him, can you still make the statement the Greeks made? Is it the desire of your heart to say, with all your heart, “Yes, we wish to see Jesus.”