

Fifth Sunday in Lent

Lectionary B, John 12:20-33

Trinity Church, March 18, 2018

“Sir, we wish to see
Jesus”

Some Greek speaking Jews came to Philip and said, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” This request has been repeated for centuries. Who is Jesus? Tell me about him. In John’s Gospel the request is a seemingly minor incident, but it gives the opportunity for Jesus to declare that his hour has arrived, a time when God will glorify him

through his death to draw all people to Himself. Since the Gospel was written in Greek, the enquiring Greeks become part of the emergent nucleus of Jesus' followers.

Today the request to know Jesus is not sought as frequently as in the past. Fewer people take an interest in religion or ask questions regarding the meaning and purpose of life. A LifeWay Research study found that 46 percent responding to the survey said they never wonder whether they will go to heaven. Asked about the question, "How can I find more meaning and

purpose in my life?” 28 percent said they never think about it. In this post Christian era, questions of meaning and purpose relating to religion are dwindling. Many know nothing about Jesus and don't care.

But at the same time that there is diminishing interest in the traditional message from churches there are those known as “nones” who say they are spiritual but not religious. Without the trappings of religious institutions they are sensing that there is a power greater than themselves and that they possess some spiritual quality within them that perceives an

otherness beyond human
consciousness. They are curious
that there is something more to life
than just their material existence.

Those of us who are part of
the traditional religious experience
can perceive as well that there is a
power beyond us that influences
the way we lead our lives. We
participate in divine energy that is
revealed in our consciousness. We
often call this relationship the
spiritual journey and participate in
it in a variety of ways including
prayer, silence, outreach, and
fellowship.

The irony of the spiritual journey is that it is often more and more about less and less. That is, the task is not to build a tower to reach the heavens to make a name for ourselves and to reach the gate of God. That was tried in the story of Babel, and the result was a confusion of many languages.

(Genesis 11:1-9) No, the task is often not to build but to release the soul from all that encumbers it.

Our initial thought for undertaking a good work is to build, to create, to do and to achieve. With enough energy and will power this works. In so many of our undertakings in

life this is the way to make a difference for the good of others. But growth in the spiritual life can be quite the opposite. Instead of memorizing doctrines, catechisms, and Bible verses, we often need to back off and simply be silent to listen. A relationship with God is not about being busy. You may achieve a good project for the community in the work you do, but if you seek a personal relationship with God you need to give God quality time to be with you. It's like any love affair. If two in love are only busy together, without time to be with the other in a

personal way – to be quiet in listening moments, the relationship will not have the opportunity to become intimate. There won't be any cuddle time to hear each other's heartbeats - to touch and hold hands.

A relationship with God yearns for the same sensitivities. Doing more and more becomes a distraction, when less and less drops the façade of the self to be vulnerable to the Beloved.

The spiritual journey is more than a pilgrimage. It can be a willingness to let go of everything – not to travel in a search, but to be

found by God in a simply setting.
The Beloved yearns for quality
time to be alone with us - to speak
gentle thoughts, not relying on
creations of our own
consciousness, but surprising us
with thoughts from a transcendent
consciousness speaking as if from
eternity -- to pluck our
heartstrings. It is in letting go of
more and more that we become
less and less, and one with the
Divine Spirit.

Paradoxes are usually true. It
is often in nothingness that God is
found. A single star illuminates our
path. It is as if a magnifying glass

focused the light to kindle a flame in one's soul. You learn that you don't need a carnival to celebrate your joy. You simply need to be – in the silence – surrounded by Love. Less becomes more.

If you hear people say, “We wish to see Jesus,” include in your response not only information about the historic Jesus and the Christ of faith, but invited them to join you in group study and fellowship, and to pursue the spiritual journey in a personal relationship with God. Rather than telling people what to believe, this relationship will probably be

nurtured through individual or group study and personal experience. The God within us isn't content to let us rely on stale doctrine or hearsay without a personal assessment.

The Spirit of Christ dwells within each of us and within this traditional congregation. We can rejoice in the gifts given to us and not fear new winds of the Spirit that may stimulate our spiritual journeys. Getting it right isn't our primary concern. Being in a loving relationship with the Source of our being comes first.

