

**April 2 2006**

Some Greeks came up to Phillip and said: "We wish to see Jesus"

We wish to see Jesus. O that the whole world would say that. O that the whole world would say it and mean it.

We wish to see Jesus. Do You? Do we? Do we really wish to see Jesus? Remember that song? I can only imagine as I recall it, the song talks about how wonderful it will be when we finally get to see Jesus to talk with him and sing with him and dance with him. Pause As I recall it. When this happens we would be dead.

Don't get me wrong I think it is good to think and Dream about what heaven will be like. What God will be like and I think it will be better than we **imagine** it to be. Isn't it interesting that when the disciplines tell Jesus, "Greeks not Geeks but Greeks, that Greeks want to see him Jesus starts talking about death. Isn't that interesting?

*"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be revealed. <sup>24</sup>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. <sup>25</sup>Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup>Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also.*

It is the hour for the Son of Man that is Jesus. The hour has come for Jesus to be revealed. The time for Jesus to be revealed for who he really is has come. The way to eternal life is also revealed. And the way is death.

The grain dies to bear fruit. Life is lost the gain is eternal life. Service has to do with following Jesus or following Jesus has to do with service. We wish to see Jesus. Do we? In the movie the Matrix, Neo is told that he is living in a life that is covering up the truth. He is offered a blue pill or a red pill. Morpheus says to him, "Take the blue pill and you just go on living your life" as you know it. Take the red pill and you follow Alice down the rabbit hole and see what happens. The implication is that he will see the truth. One of the problems is you can't have it both ways.

Pastor Gary said last week that we would like to view life as black and white and grey. In some ways it seems like that at least as we see it because as Paul says, now we see in a mirror dimly, then we will see face to face.

In reality, even though we can't see it yet it is black or white, red or blue. You can't hold on to one and have the other. O you might want to. I think we often are reluctant to let go of what we have. In fact that's part of what Jesus is talking about when he said he will draw people to himself. To be drawn by Jesus is like being drawn out of the water, dragged out of the sea, torn away.

Remember the man who approached Jesus and asked what he must do to inherit eternal life. They talked about the commandments a little bit. The rich man said they were no problem he had followed them from birth. Jesus said if you wish to be perfect. Sell all you have, give it to the poor and follow me. He went away down hearted for he had many possessions. Or he was possessed by many things. Even if we don't have many riches we have a very hard time letting go of what we do have. We would like to have it all. Even in our desire for Jesus we would like him on our own terms.

In Lutheran circles they talk about the theology of Glory vs. the theology of the cross. What better time to talk about the cross than lent. The theology of glory wants a Jesus who will make us richer, smarter, happier and more powerful. Or will in some way make us what we want to be. The theology of the cross says, the cross is the end. The end of us our will our way. And it is the beginning of a life in Jesus.

Jesus says that to follow him is to serve him. Not for our benefit but for his. That's why I don't really think we want to see Jesus. Not until we have been put to death. Figuratively that is.

That's why Luther said as he was talking about the work of the Holy Spirit. "I Believe that I can not by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with it's gifts.....

This doesn't sound like good news. But it is. The good news is in the but. I can not. I will not. I don't want to.

I can not but the Holy Spirit calls me. I will not but Jesus draws us and all people to him. One of the commentaries I read asked, why are you in church? Is it because you want to see Jesus? Maybe it's because, the Holy Spirit is calling you. Jesus is drawing you. Maybe you have a feeling that things aren't quite right in your life. Maybe you have had that feeling for quite a while.

[Good things to think about during this season of reflection and repentance.](#)

### **Easter 2006**

*The women fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.* Bob thought to himself, *for terror and amazement had seized them*

Bob looked around the sanctuary that Easter morning. Doesn't look like anybody is being seized this morning. Not by any terror and definitely not by any amazement. He looked down at his two little girls sitting next to him in their pretty dresses. They sure were pretty as pretty as their mother he thought to himself and cute.

The pastor said something and his attention snapped back to the sermon. No he hadn't said anything that brought terror or amazement. Actually Bob couldn't keep his attention on anything the preacher was saying.

He started to wonder, when was the last time he felt amazed or even anxious in church. Well there was stewardship Sunday. He always feared they would read off how much everybody gave to the church. He would be the lowest and everyone would laugh or sneer at him.

He quickly changed the subject in his mind. What about Holy week and Easter. When was the last time he even thought about the passion of Christ or his resurrection? O boy he remembered Mel Gibson's passion of the Christ. That was powerful and gross. I never want to see that again he thought. That had not been a pleasant experience. Of course it wasn't pleasant he chided himself what did he think it was going to be?

Why did he feel so uncomfortable about that movie? He did remember really despising the Jewish leaders and the Romans. O those Roman soldiers were really scary and maybe a little insane. When they started to beat Jesus they seemed like they were possessed by the violence.

But that wasn't the purpose of the passion to get angry at the Jews or the Romans or Judas. He didn't think so. O he felt so sorry for Jesus that movie really made you fell bad for Jesus. He didn't deserve that he was so innocent and he was so brutally beaten.

But is that the message of the passion of Jesus? To feel sorry for Jesus? What are we suppose to learn from the passion? Is that the key to the terror and amazement of Easter?

Bob's mind was all over the place. It was getting hot. All these people, everyone all dressed up. Seeing all these people here at church made him feel good. He started to wonder, was he the only one who wasn't with the Holy Week / Easter program? Did every body else understand what it all meant?

His attention turned to his daughter who was pulling on his arm. "Daddy did Jesus have a plane?" No honey. Why is she thinking about planes? Then why do we say Jesus suffered punching a pilate? He didn't answer. He just shushed her.

His mind went to the book he was reading about a plane that the Navy shot down by mistake. One of the characters, a Christian, was wondering how a loving God could let over 300 innocent people die.

Bob wondered how could a loving God let Jesus die? How could a loving God let this happen to Jesus, his own Son? His own Son Bob said to himself. Why? Suddenly terror and Amazement flooded over him.

It wasn't the Jews Bob thought, it wasn't the Romans or Judas. It was me. Jesus suffered for me Bob thought. Jesus was beaten and suffered in my place. It's as if I did it. It's as if I whipped him, I hit him. I nailed him to the cross. He was in my place Bob thought. For a second Bob was terrorized. Just for a second but it felt like eternity.

If God let this happen to Jesus who was innocent, who was his own son, what was in store for him.

But just as quickly he remembered, no, Jesus took it for me, took it all for me. Jesus took the pain and beating and death on the cross for me.

My punishment has been taken by Jesus. That old life of mine is taken away by Jesus. But now, Today. Today Jesus has risen to new life. My life Bob thought is in Jesus' new life, today.

The service ended and Bob still had some of that terror and amazement in him. He could feel it in his arms and legs, like he had just run a race. But he also had some of that grace and peace. There was a good feeling mixed in with that tiredness.

He didn't understand it all. He didn't know what he was going to do with it. What he was suppose to do with it. But he knew that things were now different. At our text study this week the birthday boy, Pastor Jacobson pointed out that when we come up to receive God's grace and forgiveness, to be in his presence in Holy Communion unfortunately we often just go through the motions. It can often be that way on Easter Sunday the holiest day of the year.

What if today it hit us? What if today the reality of this event hit us? He has risen he has risen indeed.

**April 30, 2006**

A pastor says to Mr. Smith, I have to tell you Mr. Smith I am disappointed in you. Why asked Mr. Smith. Well said the pastor when you joined Last Lutheran I thought you with all your gifts and your faith you would be a hard working soldier in the Army of the Lord. I am said Mr. Smith. What do you mean? You only come to the church on Christmas and Easter. Mr. Smith said, pastor I'm in the secret service.

Jesus wasn't a "secret service agent". Jesus died but now he has risen. The eleven disciples and others gathered together and talked about how people had seen Jesus. Jesus had appeared to Simon. Jesus had appeared to two men who were on the road to Emmaus, revealing himself in the breaking of the bread. Not unlike how Jesus is revealed to us in the breaking of the bread in Holy Communion.

And just as they are saying this Jesus appears with them. He has them touch his hands and feet. He asks for food to eat, broiled fish, not Lutefisk.

This puts to rest the assertion in the gospel of Judas that Jesus is just spirit or at least the resurrected Jesus was just spirit or a ghost. Ghosts and spirits don't eat. You can't touch Ghosts or spirits. At least you can't touch the ones I know. So Jesus is not a Ghost, a spirit or a secret agent. Jesus is real. Jesus is real and his message is real and the mission is real.

*<sup>45</sup>Then he [Jesus] opened their minds to understand the scriptures, <sup>46</sup>and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup>and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things. The Messiah Jesus suffered and has risen from the dead. Now is the time for repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed.*

There is something very interesting in the translation of repentance and forgiveness from the Greek. Some scholars say it should be as it says here in the NRSV. Repentance and forgiveness of sins, however some scholars believe it should read: Repentance leading to forgiveness.

If you look at it one way it doesn't make much difference which way you go. However if you look at it another way {turning my head} it may open our mind just as Jesus opened the minds of the disciples to the meaning of the scriptures.

Let's make sure we are on the same page with our terminology. First of all Repentance means to turn around. In this case a turning toward God. So it would be a turning toward God leading to forgiveness.

I think this opens up an understanding of forgiveness that makes this commission real. The question I have for you is this. Who is doing the forgiving and who is the forgiven? Our first thought and possibly our challenge is that our first thought is that our turn toward God leads to our forgiveness. Or more succinctly The grace of God shown in Jesus' suffering death and resurrection leads us to repentance, it leads us to turn to God which leads to forgiveness.

But isn't it more than that? Doesn't our turning toward God lead us to forgive? Doesn't it lead us to be like God and forgive. Isn't the message and world that God wants to

initiate a world of forgiveness?

If you are a child of God, which you are, then we are to be about the things of God like forgiveness. Want to know what it is to be like God? Enter the world of forgiveness.

Jesus gave us the negative example of this in the parable of the unforgiving servant. You remember how a servant is forgiven a great debt by his master. In the next scene he runs into a fellow servant who owes him very little compared to what he was just forgiven. But he doesn't continue the message and reality of forgiveness. He had been forgiven but didn't forgive.

We have the positive example in the old testament with Abraham and Sarah who were blessed in order that the world might be blessed through them.

In a gift of God's grace Jesus suffers, dies and is raised from the dead for your forgiveness, for you to repent, for you to turn to God.

The intent is that the forgiveness you receive would continue. God's intent is not for your forgiveness to end with you. If you are forgiven and let the forgiveness dies with us then

**The grace of God**

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**which leads to forgiveness.**

we have learned nothing.

In the spirit of our reading in John today, Let us remember that we are children of God. As children of God, let us not sin. As children of God let us be like God and experience what it is like to forgive.

Here is some homework for you. See how many times you can forgive this week.

**Homework**

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