

Sermon for The Fourth Sunday in Lent

Date: March 14, 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

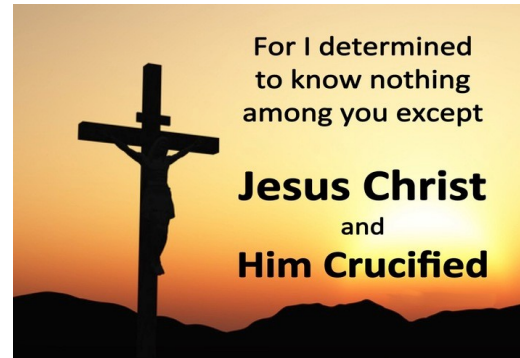
Old Testament: Zechariah 9:9–12

Epistle Reading: Philippians 2:5–11

Gospel Reading: John 12:20-33

Sermon Text: John 12:20-33

Sermon Title: Christ Crucified For You



Introit: Psalm 27:3-5; Antiphon: Psalm 37:1

Hymns:

LSB 837 – Life High the Cross

LSB 566 – By Grace I'm Saved

LSB 744 – Amazing Grace

Liturgy:

Divine Service III, p. 184



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Text: John 12:20–33

Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

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Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, ‘Sir, we wish to see Jesus.’¹

These words should be a dream come true to anyone who wants to share Jesus with the people around them. People coming up and saying, ‘tell me about Jesus.’ Sign them up for new member classes, give them some brochures, introduce them to the pastor! All our efforts are finally paying off. The Word is getting out. The Kingdom is growing!

Except when they tell Jesus, He doesn’t seem so excited. He starts talking about death, and being troubled, and judgment. He talks about being crucified. Instead of giving these ‘seekers’ an audience, Jesus, in effect, says:

They want to see me? They’ll see me. They’re going to see me with everyone else, when I am lifted up from the earth on the cross. They’re going to see me in humiliation, weakness, suffering and pain. They’re going to see me die.²

You have to believe Andrew and Philip were thinking, “Uh, I don’t think that’s what they had in mind.”

What do we have in mind? What kind of Jesus are people seeking today? For what kind of Jesus are people looking? We’re not told why these Greeks wanted to see Jesus, but if they’re like most folks, we can probably make some pretty good guesses. They were probably looking for a Jesus who would help them solve some problem. Maybe they were looking for a Jesus to work a miracle for them. Isn’t that too often what we all do? Look for a Jesus to meet our expectations, our ideas, and our opinions of what He should be, and what He should be doing. The problem is Jesus will not be confined or conformed to our wishes.

He doesn’t jump through the hoops we set for Him. He doesn’t do what we want Him to do. He won’t be who we want Him to be. **He came to go to the cross.** He came to die. Anyone who want to see Him must see Him there. Apart from the cross He is not your Savior. He might be a spectacle, a wonder, a display people

1 John 12:20-21

2 John 12:24-27 *Paraphrased*

may be willing to wait in line to see. Yet apart from the cross, that is all He would be, an attraction. He came to be so much more than that. Jesus said:

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.³

Jesus says:

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.⁴

Not glorified by men, not acclaimed and exalted for His wisdom, power or success. The hour had come for Him to be glorified by His Father for His obedience, His suffering, His weakness, His humiliation and His most shameful and inglorious death. That is the glory of God.

God's glory is not that He remains in Heaven and demands that we climb up to Him. Jesus' glory is in coming down to us. His glory is in becoming a servant to us, and for us. His glory is in He was not ashamed to become one of us. God's glory is in the gift of His Son coming to be our Brother and Savior, and to die on the cross for you. If you want to see Jesus, if you want to see Him as He really is, if you want to understand His will, His ways, His love and His mercy, look at the cross. On that cross, look and see. That is God. That humiliated, shameful, weak, pathetic, condemned like a criminal, punished and pummeled man, that is God. That is God **for you**.

You know a lot of people are offended by a statement like that. People do not want a God like that. They don't want to see God like that. Their not looking for a God like that. They want to see Him as a King, enthroned, powerful, guiding and directing all things by His might. That's God! It is. It is, but that is not God **for you**.

That God might be a frightening God. A God of such majesty, such holiness, such awesomeness, that God is above you, served by you. Not for you. Our hands and feet, mouths and tongue, eyes and ears, hearts and minds have all done that which we know is beneath one who could stand in the presence of such a Holy One. We have said what should not be said. We have seen what should not be seen. We have thought what should not be thought. We have done what should not be done. When we look at ourselves, in all those ways and more, all we can do is wring our hands and keep washing, but like Lady MacBeth, the blood remains. We cannot wash out the stain.

3 John 12:24

4 John 12:23

We all know ourselves better than anyone else does. We know our own sin, and with such shame and sin we could not possibly stand before a holy, perfect, and awesome God. We know He would see our sin covering and staining us. That is not a God who is for you.

God knows better than we do! We have been given the gift of going to the God who is just like us, because He came down from His throne and became one of us. He took on our human nature, He walked in our mess. Even more than that, He took our sin and swill on Himself. What we could not remove, He removed. He grabbed it, took it from us, and put it all on Himself, and carried it to the cross. Look at the cross! There is our God! A glorious God. A God who would do that for a messed up sinner like you. He did that for you. That is how God wants to be seen and known, not in power but in weakness; not in majesty but in shame; not in exaltation but in humiliation. That is just what Jesus tells those people that day.

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified...

And I, when I am lifted up from the earth,
I will draw all people to myself.⁵

That is the God we are drawn to, and the God we approach, and which we hold up for others to see, all by the Holy Spirit's power. He is the One, the only One, who takes away our sin.⁶ He is our Savior.

Understand it this way:

Christ died – that's history.
Christ died for us – that's Christianity.
Christ died for you – that's salvation.

To provide for your salvation, to save you from: sin, eternal death, an eternal grave, and Satan, Jesus came for you. That's why He wants to be seen lifted up on the cross. That's why He rose from the dead on the Third Day. "For us and for our salvation."⁷

Jesus is drawing you to Himself on the cross. Though His work of salvation in dying and rising, it is finished. He is giving the gifts earned for you in His death and resurrection: His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation He is still giving.

Jesus said:

Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life
in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves

5 John 12:32

6 John 1:29

7 Second article of the Nicene Creed

Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there will My servant be also.⁸

That end of that is the most important. “Where I am, there will My servant be also.” We are His servants when we are where He is. So where is He? Scripture calls us to:

Seek the Lord where He may be found.
Call on Him when He is near.⁹

Where is that for you? Right here. He has promised to be here for you, in His Holy Word, in the waters of Holy Baptism, and at the altar in the Holy Communion.

We cannot go up to Heaven, and we cannot go back in time to the cross, so He brings the cross and Heaven here to you. There we are forgiven and cleansed of all sin; we are given a new life which will last for all eternity; and we are given the gift of freedom and salvation. Salvation for you. In Him you can live the life your Savior has given. A life free from worry, a life free from the burden and terror of the Law, a life filled with the grace, mercy, and peace of God. The very things for which we seek, not knowing how to find.

As Holy Week draws ever closer, we will again focus and see Jesus where, and as, He wants to be seen, in shame and humiliation on the cross. He wants it no other way. He said so. He said:

What shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’?
But for this purpose I have come to this hour.¹⁰

He will not avoid it. He will be lifted up, so that He may lift us up.

“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

When people want to be seen, they try to look their best. See Jesus at His best, in His glory, on the cross. See Him there for you.

Amen.

Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people

8 John 12:25
9 Isaiah 55:6
10 John 12:27

