

Do You Wish To See Jesus?
5th Sunday of Lent
North East United Methodist Church
April 7, 2019
Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

PRAYER

John 12: 20-33 (NKJV) - *Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”*

John records that one day certain Greeks approached Philip and asked, “*Sir, we wish to see Jesus.*”

“*Sir, we wish to see Jesus.*” Here’s the question: Do we? Do we wish to see Jesus? Really?

Throughout history Jesus has split the world into two.

- *Into two time periods – BC and AD.
- *Into two ways of looking at our neighbor – as those who are like us – as everyone.
- *Into two ways of seeing the poor – as a burden – as a gift and an opportunity to serve.
- *Into two ways of measuring success – he who has the most toys wins – he who gives the most away wins.
- *Into two ways of believing –
 - *Jesus was either insane making the claims He did or Jesus was who He said He was – the Son of God.
 - *Everyone is right or there is simply one way to heaven.
 - *All it takes is being a good person or all it takes is recognizing ourselves as sinners in need of God’s grace.

I remember an article printed in The Seaford Star a few years back...Rev. Todd K. Crofford from the Laurel Wesleyan Church wrote an article in response to the controversy surrounding the film, *The Passion of the Christ*. In that article he talked about the fact that the controversy is not over the things many are talking about on the television. The controversy really isn’t over the violence in the film. He writes, “*Any regular moviegoer can list scores of movies with horrific and gratuitous violence without any outcry from the public.*” It’s not about anti-Semitism for respected Jewish, Christian, and secular leaders have watched the film and declared it not anti-Semitic. Every time Producer Mel Gibson is asked who is to “blame” for the crucifixion, he lays responsibility on the sins of all people, including himself. It’s not about Mel Gibson. He has been no more and much less controversial in Hollywood than others. The controversy surrounds Jesus. Crofford writes, “***The controversy is in the same place it***

has always been. It surrounds Jesus. His life, death, and resurrection remain the great dividing line of history.”

Do we really wish to see this Jesus? To know Him? To follow Him?

Throughout our growing up in the church, we have been shown a picture of Jesus that is less than complete.



We have grown up seeing a Jesus with long hair, loving eyes, kind words, reaching out to the little children and reaching down to lift up the sick and hurting.



We think of Jesus and we think of peace and love. We think of a Jesus who walks in the garden and talks with us while the dew is still on the roses.

Words to describe him – loving, humble, positive, patient, pacifist, Holy, the Good Shepherd.

Yet, why would such a Jesus that spoke of loving God with your whole heart and loving your neighbor as yourself... a Jesus that was the Good Shepherd, going after the lost lamb, healing the sick... why was such a Jesus hated so much that they arrested Him and

nailed His hands and feet to a tree, the most horrific punishment left for only the worst criminals.



Jesus was controversial. Then as well as today He split the world in two. Jesus was not only pacifist, He was conqueror. He did not only love, He rebuked with righteous anger. He was not only Holy and peaceful, He was offensive. He was not only humble and inclusive, but He was exclusive, claiming to be the only way to the Father. He not only brought a shepherd's staff with him but a sword.

Jesus was and is controversial because according to Jesus, what I, what you, what we think about Him and believe and how we respond to Him will determine our destiny for all eternity.

Philip Yancey writes, “*Jesus, I found, bore little resemblance to the Mister Rogers figure I met in Sunday school, and was remarkably unlike the person I had studied in Bible college... One day miracles seemed to flow out of Jesus; the next day his power was blocked by people’s lack of faith. One day he talked in detail of the Second Coming, another, he knew neither the day nor hour. He fled from arrest at one point and marched inexorably toward it at another. He spoke eloquently about peacemaking, then told his disciples to procure swords. His extravagant claims about himself kept him at the center of controversy, but when he did something truly miraculous he tended to hush it up. As Walter Wink has said, “If Jesus had never lived, we would not have been able to invent him.” Yancey goes on to say, “Two words one could never think of applying to the Jesus of the Gospels: boring and predictable. How is it, then, that the church has tamed such a character – has in Dorothy Sayers’ words, “very efficiently pared the claws of the Lion of Judah, certified Him as a fitting household pet for pale curates and pious old ladies”?*”



Why does the church tame this Jesus? Why do we not deal with the sharp edges of the Son of God? Because they are demanding on us. They call for our transformation. They challenge us. Step on our toes. They shatter the picture we have had since singing, *Jesus Loves Me, This I Know* as a child. Do we really wish to see such a Jesus?

I want us to look at three teachings of Jesus, found in the Gospel of Luke, that shatter the image of a long-haired, peace-loving hippie that will simply bring us peace and prosperity, who it is easy to pray a prayer and give our hearts to... Let us look at the controversial Jesus.

First, Luke 11: 37-44 (NLT) - *As Jesus was speaking, one of the Pharisees invited him home for a meal. So he went in and took his place at the table. His host was amazed to see that he sat down to eat without first performing the hand-washing ceremony required by Jewish custom. Then the Lord said to him, "You Pharisees are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and wickedness! Fools! Didn't God make the inside as well as the outside? So clean the inside by giving gifts to the poor, and you will be clean all over. "What sorrow awaits you Pharisees! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore justice and the love of God. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things. "What sorrow awaits you Pharisees! For you love to sit in the seats of honor in the synagogues and receive respectful greetings as you walk in the marketplaces. Yes, what sorrow awaits you! For you are like hidden graves in a field. People walk over them without knowing the corruption they are stepping on."*

Throughout the Gospels, we find a Jesus that tore down and heavily criticized the religious establishment. Jesus hated religion. We want to see a Jesus, who if He came back today, would quickly make His way to our church to hang out and worship with us. Most likely, Jesus would avoid many of our churches like the plague for the same reasons He criticized the Pharisees, the church leaders of His day. It upset Jesus greatly that people in the church were acting as if they loved God on the outside; yet, on the inside, there was no heart change, no willingness to sacrifice. In fact, Jesus even called those in

the church of the day “*children of the devil.*” He was offensive, challenging people to tear their hearts and to get real with God.

Secondly, Luke 12: 49-53 (NLT) - *“I have come to set the world on fire, and I wish it were already burning! I have a terrible baptism of suffering ahead of me, and I am under a heavy burden until it is accomplished. Do you think I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I have come to divide people against each other! From now on families will be split apart, three in favor of me, and two against—or two in favor and three against. ‘Father will be divided against son and son against father; mother against daughter and daughter against mother; and mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.’”*

We associate Jesus with bringing peace, yet, Jesus Himself said that he did not come to earth to bring peace, but instead to bring a sword. Jesus will cause division. John MacArthur, in his book, *Hard to Believe*, writes, “[Jesus does not give] a friendly invitation...it’s a warning. If you give your life to Jesus Christ, there will be an impassable gulf between you and people who don’t give their lives to Him.” Jesus challenged that we must be willing to pay the price of a permanent split in our families unless our loved ones come to Christ. Jesus came to offer an alternative to the world and all must make a decision where they stand. This decision for or against Christ, to follow Christ into the future, to give our lives to His goals and purpose and not our agendas, to live as faithful disciples...this choice, this decision to follow Jesus, will separate families, communities, nations, and even churches.

Thirdly, Luke 9: 23-26 (NLT) – *Then he said to the crowd, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed? If anyone is ashamed of me and my message, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in his glory and in the glory of the Father and the holy angels.*

Jesus is not about self-fulfillment which many churches teach. Come to Jesus and you will find fulfillment, life will be good, your every wish will be granted. Jesus is about self-denial. As MacArthur writes, ***“If you want to be Christ’s disciple you must refuse to associate any longer with the person you are...You are sick of your sinful self and want nothing to do with you anymore...The goal is the unfamiliar one of sorrowfully acknowledging sin, of submission, of sacrifice...If we are not willing to separate from our families, from the world, from the material things we possess, then Jesus is not so valuable to us – it is an all or nothing proposition.”*** This certainly makes me want to sign up.

Following Jesus is challenging.



In this life, if anything it will add to your difficulties. You will be asked to associate with people that repulse you and to love them. You will be asked to tear down your traditions and focus on transformation, a change of heart. You will be asked to separate from family, from the world. You will be asked to decide. ***“He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”*** Not a cherry proposition, but the eternal rewards...wow...the eternal rewards are beyond our best imagination. Jesus said, ***“If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.”***

Jesus calls for us to make a decision...He does not force us...He simply offers.

During Lent and throughout our Christian walks, we must ask what following this Jesus means for our lives. What are we holding on to we must let go? Do we only see one side of this Jesus? Have we truly given our lives over to Him? Are we religious or are we disciples of Jesus? Are we loving those Jesus would love? Are we willing to sacrifice our wants and desires, this world, for Him? Do we really wish to see Him up close...to walk with Him...to call Him “my Jesus”...Really?



Jesus’ voice cries over the tumult of this world, ***“He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.”***

May our voices cry out to God...our choice made...committed to follow both Lamb and Lion...willing to pay the price...may our voices cry out to God, "*Sir, we wish to see Jesus*"...

VIDEO - <http://youtu.be/Y5Svz6YFtkI>

*Which Jesus do you follow?
Which Jesus do you serve?
If Ephesians says to imitate Christ
Then why do you look so much like the world?*

*Cause my Jesus bled and died
He spent His time with thieves and liars
He loved the poor and accosted the arrogant
So which one do you want to be?*

*Blessed are the poor in spirit
Or do we pray to be blessed with the wealth of this land
Blessed are they that hunger and thirst for righteousness
Or do we ache for another taste of this world of shifting sand*

*Cause my Jesus bled and died for my sins
He spent His time with thieves and sluts and liars
He loved the poor and accosted the rich
So which one do you want to be?*

*Who is this that you follow
This picture of the American dream
If Jesus was here would you walk right by on the other side or fall down and worship at
His holy feet*

*Pretty blue eyes and curly brown hair and a clear complexion
Is how you see Him as He dies for Your sins
But the Word says He was battered and scarred
Or did you miss that part
Sometimes I doubt we'd recognize Him*

*Cause my Jesus bled and died
He spent His time with thieves and the least of these
He loved the poor and accosted the comfortable
So which one do you want to be?*

*Cause my Jesus would never be accepted in my church
The blood and dirt on His feet might stain the carpet*

*But He reaches for the hurting and despises the proud
I think He'd prefer Beale St. to the stained glass crowd
And I know that He can hear me if I cry out loud*

*I want to be like my Jesus!
I want to be like my Jesus!
I want to be like my Jesus!
I want to be like my Jesus!*

*Not a poster child for American prosperity, but like my Jesus
You see I'm tired of living for success and popularity
I want to be like my Jesus but I'm not sure what that means to be like You Jesus
Cause You said to live like You, love like You but then You died for me
Can I be like You Jesus?
I want to be like you Jesus!
I want to be like my Jesus!*