

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” They were talking with Philip and that’s all they said. A simple request meriting a simple response. Or maybe not. They wanted to see Jesus, merely look at him, maybe meet him, have conversation or make a request, we honestly don’t know. Maybe they wanted to see a famous prophet, a rabbi, the Messiah, a miracle-worker, the future king. Truthfully, we don’t even know if they ever caught a glimpse of Jesus.

People still want to see Jesus. Sometimes to make a wish like they were seeing a genie. Sometimes they’ve heard that follow Jesus and be wealthy, famous, powerful, follow Jesus and illnesses will be healed/cured/conquered. Follow Jesus the golden ticket, follow Jesus and win, follow Jesus and be healthy, wealthy and wise, to say nothing of famous and powerful. Follow Jesus and can get anything desired. Wealth, fame, power, wonderful business acumen. After all, isn’t eternal life just like life now but better looking, healthier, wealthier without any more tears? Aren’t we promised a mansion in heaven with many indulgences that we don’t have now?

Well dear ones, I suspect you don’t really need me to answer any of those questions. Of course the answer is no, and you know as well as I do, we’re not here to worship ourselves, to worship wealth, to worship stuff man-made or not. Jesus came to die, he says “it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.” And he expects you and I to do the same, we, like a grain of wheat, like the Son of God, must lose our lives in this world and die with Christ. And that is that what our faith is about, why we are called to become disciples.

No prosperity gospel here, not in this text, nor anywhere else in scripture. Whatever else you might have heard from television evangelists or some of the preachers on the radio, the abundant life isn’t about having a lot of everything that makes life pleasurable. There’s no self-interest here, we’re not giving in order to get.

“We wish to see Jesus.” But to see him, we must see him on the cross, dying for our sakes, to see that a new creation has come about, there are no more sacrifices, there is nothing we can give in exchange for Jesus’ death. We must understand that the new creation entails both our dying and our being born again, death and rebirth. As Christ was lifted up, he is affirmed by a voice that came from heaven. As Christ was lifted up, he draws all people to himself, we and myriad sisters and brothers, young and old, ardent and infirm alike.

We will all of us die at some point, we may fear death, we may fear the process, but it will come, life as we know it, must come to an end. It’s reality. But it doesn’t mean we don’t live and die in hope, in the faith that has sustained us through life, it doesn’t mean that we live for the moment. Instead we live for Christ, we die in Christ, we who are baptized are the work of the Holy Spirit, we are each of us a work in progress, dying and

living anew, our Creator God creating something new in us every day, our sinful selves dying, raised up as God's children, who love because God has first loved us, who love with the very love we ourselves receive in abundance, from God.

You and I were given to Christ in our baptisms, our lives, our bodies, are not our own, we inhabit them, we live them, but not for ourselves, by faith we live into the new creation and future that God gives to all who believe. We wish to see Jesus. We see him on the cross bringing about the new creation of which we are now a part, living the truly abundant life, a life lived in and through and for God and for others, serving the servants of God in service to God. This is why we are here. Dying is the easy part, living the new life we are each of us called to live is the hard part, living and walking wet in the waters of our baptisms, enlivened by the Holy Spirit.

We wish to see Jesus but we do not yet see clearly, even though he lived for us and died for us, and lives again, somewhere ahead of us even as he walks with us. We have been given a precious gift, by grace through faith, we already have eternal life, and we know that the path to life, true life, lies in the shadow of the cross.

AMEN