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### SEEING JESUS

When I was twelve, I had a tumor on the base of my brain.

- The doctors decided to do a biopsy of the tumor to determine how best to treat it.
- The morning of the surgery, I was taken into a small room where my head was shaved and then I was left on the gurney until they came to take me to surgery.
  - As I lay there with my eyes closed, I felt a hand on my arm.
  - Thinking it was the orderly, I opened my eyes but no one was there.
    - I immediately knew that it was JESUS telling me by HIS touch that HE was going to be with me through the surgery and all my life.
- I didn't see HIM, but I felt HIS touch.

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Have you ever seen JESUS? Really seen JESUS?

- Do we even want to see JESUS? Actually, see JESUS?
  - Or do we pretend, feign interest, when in fact, seeing JESUS might honestly be more than we want,
    - and might make us uncomfortable or move us to a place we would rather not be.

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*"Sir, we would like to see JESUS."*

I'm rather amazed by these Greeks.

- Certainly, in John's gospel, they represent more than the Jewish nation. They are Gentiles.
- They represent the world, the world that GOD loves, the world that GOD saves.
  - They also represent the world that too often rejects the presence of GOD that just might challenge its view of the world and what GOD's call to faithfulness might look like.

These Greeks represent us.

- And they ask what we should ask.
  - As it turns out, this verse is carved in pulpits around the world as a reminder to preachers that our sermons should never be simply information about JESUS.
    - They should enable the seeing of JESUS, the experiencing of JESUS.

*[Now you're all going to be evaluating this sermon, aren't you?]*

But if a sermon only entertains, then perhaps it is not worth taking the time to hear.

- It is maybe worth no more than the Sunday paper.

Is that what we really want on our Sundays?

- Do we want a simple piece of information, or do we want a worship experience that has meaning?
- Do we want a Sunday morning message that just entertains or an experience that shapes our lives for the week ahead and opens new possibilities for us?

Truth is that having that happen doesn't just depend upon the preacher.

- It begins with us and the question, "Do we come to worship looking for JESUS?"

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I once raised that question in a different way in another congregation to help them think about the JESUS they sought.

- I brought a picture of a laughing, joyful JESUS into the worship center.
- A few weeks later that picture had gone away.
  - When we come to worship, do we really want to see JESUS?

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The request of the Greeks is critical for our time.

- They ask to see.
  - They don't request the proof that the Pharisees did.
  - They don't ask for an audience as did Nicodemus.
  - They don't seek an argument as the lawyers tried.
    - They just want to see.
    - They get what "come and see" is all about—an invitation to be with.
    - An invitation to abide.
    - An invitation to relationship.
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And yet, how often do we ask to see, or even get a glimpse of JESUS?

- Even if we do, too often we've already decided what is worth seeing.
  - We only look for what we *want* to see, which is not necessarily who and what JESUS is.

Often the pictures a predominantly white congregation puts up are of fair-haired, fair-skinned JESUS.

- But JESUS had dark hair and dark skin.
  - The JESUS of the Gospels is the ONE who breaks the rules, goes to the places, and talks and ministers to the people that might not sit well with us:
    - Foreigners, soldiers, the illegitimate, the crazy, politicians, women, children, the poor, the sick, the abused.
    - But is this the JESUS we want to see?
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Think of what is happening these days in leadership, in our churches, in the way we interact with each other, especially on social media where we can set aside responsible civility

- We only see to judge, to maintain our own self-righteousness.
- We don't see to know, to learn, to understand each other.
  - And we certainly don't look to see JESUS in the faces or the lives or the situations of the people with whom we interact.
  - But JESUS is there if only we would try to see JESUS.

Do we even think we might see JESUS?

- Or that GOD is active or present in our daily moments?
  - Perhaps we talk about GOD, but we do it as though GOD were not really in the room.
  - We talk about GOD as if GOD were simply an abstract idea, rather than an essential presence in our conversations.
  - We talk about GOD as if GOD was only something experienced long ago but not constantly being revealed in new ways.

How can we help others to see when we don't see JESUS ourselves?

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I can't help but feel we've descended into a form of idolatry, worshiping the GOD we've created in our minds, rather than the ONE revealed by JESUS.

- So, we miss the possibilities of GOD's revealing because we can't even consider that GOD might do something different from what we've already determined GOD will do.
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That's what led the religious leaders to want to kill JESUS.

- The GOD whom JESUS revealed didn't fit what they had decided GOD must be like.
- The GOD whom JESUS revealed cared about those whom the leaders were convinced GOD could only judge and punish.
- The GOD whom JESUS revealed loved all people and desired a close relationship with each person, and they just couldn't see it.

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The same thing happens today with those who preach what is often called the “Prosperity Gospel.”

- “GOD wants you to be happy and healthy and toward that end, GOD wants you to be rich,” they claim.
  - “Live the right kind of life, show your faith by how much you give the Church...well, their church...and GOD will bless you.”
- Following that line of thought, it becomes easy to tell who are the ones who have been less than faithful, who have sinned in ways that GOD cannot, will not condone, or forgive.
  - They are the ones upon whom hard times fall because, clearly, GOD would otherwise spare them or protect them or bless them.
    - And when life doesn’t go their way, they struggle to find the right formula, the magic pill that will bring the love of GOD back.

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Yet the GOD whom JESUS reveals is the GOD who is present with people in the midst of troubles,

- and who calls us to be present with them as well.
  - We see JESUS when we follow HIS example to serve those in need.
  - We see JESUS when we show the love that HE showed to those who were unlovable.
  - We see JESUS when we serve as JESUS served.

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I saw JESUS years ago when a homeless man walked into the Lenten soup supper and was offered a meal and a place at the table.

- I saw JESUS in a friend who took a day off from work to drive two hours to sit in the hospital with a friend.
- I saw JESUS in a man who agreed to co-sign a rental agreement for a man he’d only known for a few weeks.
- I saw JESUS in a student who walked out of school for a cause she believed to be necessary and righteous.
- I saw JESUS in an 18-year-old waitress who reached over the counter to cut food for a man on oxygen whose hands no longer worked well.

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*[Take a moment right now to think of a time when you saw JESUS.]*

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The request of the Greeks is an open-ended wish.

- No pre-determined outcomes.
- No preconceived notions.
  - Not only did they see JESUS, but they heard a voice from heaven praising JESUS for HIS actions that gave glory to GOD.

Because, Christian, that’s what can happen when looking for JESUS without expectations.

- GOD will be and is present when we seek JESUS in whatever way HE might come.
  - And, indeed, when we minister as JESUS did, we will see JESUS in the faces of those we serve
    - and will know that we have glorified the FATHER who sent HIM.

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Do you want to see JESUS? Really see HIM?

- Then follow HIS example and seek to offer to others what HE HIMSELF would offer to them.
  - In doing so, I promise that you will see JESUS.