

Fifth Sunday in Lent, Gospel, Year B

YOU WILL SEE HIM WHEN HE IS ON A CROSS

John 12:20-33

The Fifth Sunday in Lent

Analysis by Timothy Hoyer

20Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. 21They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. 23Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24Very 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. 25Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

27"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. 28Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." 29The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." 30Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. 31Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. 32And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." 33He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

DIAGNOSIS: What Are You Looking At?

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Let me see! Let me see!

We like to see things. They amuse us and help us love our life. We see a pretty sunset and are delighted. We go to the movies to see the show. And when other people talk of what they have seen, we feel good that we have seen the same things. "Yes, I've seen that!" We feel we have achieved something just as the others have. Thus, we love our life at that moment. The Greeks, however, never got to see Jesus—not that we know of.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): I've Seen What You've Seen

To love our life is to trust our life—the good, the fun, loving and being loved, the things we enjoy and savor. We depend on the things of this life to make us good, to give our life worth, to show that we did something with our life. So all the things of this life that we look to, that we "see," become our gods. For a god is whatever we look to save us when in trouble and whatever we look at to give us good things.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): What Is Seen Is No More

The things of this world that we see and depend on rule this world. But they are not THE God. Anything we see will eventually not be seeable. It just won't exist anymore. Thus it eventually will not be a god. And as we have lived looking at things, looking at them and evaluating them for whether or not they look good to us, please us, or make our life feel good, we will be evaluated by God. God will see us for who we are. God will see into our hearts and see what we have trusted. And because we love this life, we die and return to dust. We become nothing.

PROGNOSIS: See Jesus on a Cross

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Look Here at Jesus

But now is the time for Jesus to be glorified. Now is the time to see Jesus on a cross. That is his glory. It is in his death, being buried like a seed, that he bears much fruit—his resurrection to new life, and the resurrection of all people drawn to him. To Jesus, losing his life is the one thing to see. He does not trust the pretty things he sees to make his life worth something. He loses his life, and thus he is raised from death and he keeps his life for eternal life.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (External Solution): Jesus Is for You
It is there on the cross that Jesus is to be seen, that is, trusted. There on the ugliness of the cross Jesus is to be seen as the glory of God. The strength of God is the weakness of Jesus on a cross. The power of God is the helplessness of Jesus on a cross. The mercy of God is the condemnation of Jesus on a cross. Now that we see Jesus crucified and risen, we see him as the goodness of our lives (see the Sabbatheology for the Second Sunday in Lent, Mark 8:31-38, analysis by Glenn L. Monson).

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): See the Beauty in New Places

When we see Jesus on the cross as the goodness of our lives, we can then see the weariness of others. Instead of averting our eyes so we are not troubled, instead of turning our eyes to see someone lively and energetic, we can trust that in the weariness of another, we can see the goodness of Jesus. We can see the weariness and give rest, give hope, give encouragement. We can love those who are weary. We can see the poor, and see beauty in caring for and helping and being gentle with. We can see those dying of disease, and in them we delight that they have the beauty of Jesus on a cross. In death there is now life; in condemnation there is now forgiveness, and in despair there is now hope. For we see Jesus on a cross and see mercy and eternal life.