

On this Passion Sunday or as the lectionary calls it Lent 5 our focus changes to the final days of Jesus life. Our gospel takes place in the last week of Jesus life following the events of Palm Sunday when he rode into Jerusalem on the donkey. It begins with Philip wanting to introduce some Greeks to Jesus. Philip is one of the first disciples to meet Jesus and his first instinct is to go and get his friend Nathanael and introduce him to Jesus too.

We hear about him again in the story of the feeding of the 5 thousand when he questions Jesus about how they will buy bread for so many people and then sees for himself that miracle which points to the eucharist as Jesus calls himself the bread of life. Now in todays reading we find him again trying to introduce people to Jesus. It is passover and the streets of Jerusalem are full of pilgrims from al over the world. Some Greeks come to Philip and ask for his help. "We want to see Jesus."

We expect Jesus to say great bring them to me for a chat. But the time for the gentile mission is later now Jesus has more important work. The hour has come for the son of man to be glorified. My death is coming. But how can death mean glorification? We might think that Palm Sunday was the moment of glorification as Jesus was hailed by the crowds as the king. But in God's topsy turvey world glorification comes when Jesus is nailed to a cross not when people hail him as Lord and King. Those who love their life must lose it says Jesus. For God's glory is not ours. God's glory is found in humble service and ultimate sacrifice.

When the time does come for the Greeks to meet Jesus St Paul tries to explain this utterly new way of thinking and as he does so he acknowledges that this is not how we think about things. The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. In every culture where the message is new the idea that in order to save us Jesus chose to die a horrible death is hard to grasp. We read how St Paul debated for hours first with Jews who had a vision of messiah as warrior and then with Greeks whose world view would never have allowed for God to suffer. But most often what the early disciples did was not debate but simply introduce people to Jesus. When Peter spoke to the crowds on the day of Pentecost it was Jesus he introduced showing that he was God's Son who had been foretold by the prophets. How Jesus had lived among the people doing deeds of power and bringing God's message of love to the poor and hopeless. The crucifixion is only mentioned at the end when having proved that Jesus is the Messiah he tells the crowd "And you condemned him to death."

After Philip has been filled with the Holy Spirit he is sent by the Spirit out of Jerusalem to Samaria where he continues his work of introducing people to Jesus and the followers of Jesus begin to grow. Now as then it is Jesus people want to meet and it is Jesus we are called to introduce to people just like Philip did. This means we must know him ourselves and we do this by reading his teaching and walking with him day by day in our lives as we talk to him in prayer. Taking Jesus with us to work or about our daily round. Constantly talking to him throughout the day as we make plans and ponder the day's problems. Holding those we meet in his love and taking their needs to him in prayer. And finally at the end of the day reflecting with Jesus on all that has happened. It is in looking back that we see Jesus at work within and through us. It is in reflecting on the day that we learn from what has gone wrong and what has gone well and little by little grow we grow in that most important of Christian virtues wisdom.

The disciples were able to tell people how to be like Jesus because they lived with him day in day out for three years. They saw how his life was rooted in prayer. How in God's power he could do wonderful things and most importantly of all see people as God sees them. In seeing people with God's eyes Jesus could love them in a way that enabled them to see themselves differently and hence become the people God meant them to be. When Matthew and Zacchaeus met Jesus his loving acceptance enabled them to give up their lives of corruption and greed and become his followers. No longer getting their self worth from wealth they were freed to follow Jesus into new ways of being that gave them real satisfaction.

Even those who let Jesus down knew forgiveness and release from guilt. Peter whose bravado at the last supper so quickly turned to betrayal is restored beside the lake of Galilee. Freed from the terrible guilt he felt at letting Jesus down he then spent the rest of his days introducing others to Jesus.

As I have looked back on my life especially as I have been talking to parents about baptism and bringing up their children in the faith I have come to realise just what a good job my own parents did in introducing me to Jesus. As a consequence there has never been a time in my life when I have not known Jesus because he was a reality in our home. Of course during my life I have got to know him better and been given new insights into what it means to be a disciple as I have grown in the wisdom that comes from God. So if we want to see Jesus and live in his light this is how to do it. Then we will be able and hopefully willing to share what we have found with those who ask us for an introduction.

The world is full of people who need to meet Jesus because only by knowing him can they fully live this life and be the people God knows they can be. Our call is to introduce Jesus by shining as lights for him in the world and serving him by loving our neighbours. We can only do this if we carry him with us at all times so that we are ready and able to introduce him whenever we are asked this life changing question. "We would like to meet Jesus too."

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Diocese of Chichester 21 March 2021