

St Marc Grenoble  
Sunday 21st March 2021 (5th in Lent) Passion Sunday  
Jeremiah 31: 31 - 34  
Psalm 51: 1 - 13  
John 12: 20 - 30  
**'We want to see Jesus'**

**Good morning**  
**PRAY**

In Anglican circles today - 5th Sunday in Lent, is also called Passion Sunday - it's the beginning of Passiontide and from today, the lectionary readings begin to focus on Jesus' clear warnings, (or announcements) to His followers, His Disciples, of His impending death.

So, it's always surprised me that His disciples were so shocked when Jesus was crucified. I guess the fact is that human beings generally hate any change; and hope and expect everything will continue just as it has always done. Of course, it rarely does.

So, today's Gospel reading is ideal for us today, when we have so much unpredictable change all around us.

This morning, I want to explore this story, and have a look at the historical context surrounding it; but I also want to see what it has to say to us, in our present circumstances.

We need to remember that, during His time on earth, Jesus grew up and spent His life as a faithful, observant Jew. As our reading begins, He was travelling with many others, towards Jerusalem for the Passover festival.

On the way, He'd stopped by Bethany where his friends Lazarus, Martha and Mary lived. If you remember, a while earlier, Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, which at the time attracted massive attention to Jesus.

This made the Pharisees, the conservative, legalistic religious Jews, even more irritated by His activities. Jesus was threatening their religious status quo, upsetting the Jewish hierarchy and, potentially, the Romans too.

This morning's reading starts by reporting that some Greeks (who were foreigners, Gentiles) came to Philip and said 'We'd like to meet Jesus' - they'd heard so much about Him, they wanted to find out for themselves what all the fuss was about. So, Philip told Andrew and, together, they went to tell Jesus.

This part of the story has a deep subtext - do you remember how Andrew was called? (Jn 1: 36) He'd heard John the Baptist say: 'Look there's the Lamb of God' and he was following Jesus; when Jesus turned and spoke to him; Andrew asked Jesus: 'Rabbi, where are you staying?? And Jesus invited: 'Come and see'.

A little later, Jesus called Philip, and Philip brought his brother Nathaniel - who asked: 'Can anything good come from Nazareth?' - Philip's response was 'Come and see!'

The way to trust Jesus is to have a personal experience of meeting Him.

Now, about three years later, these Greek enquirers had come to Philip and said 'Sir, we'd like to meet Jesus'. Not only had the call to discipleship gone 'full circle'; but there's a clear link between those 'first called' Jewish disciples and the arrival of these first 'Gentile' disciples - asking to meet Jesus for themselves.

The miracles Jesus performed attracted a lot of interest; but it needed His disciples to bring these Gentile seekers to actually meet Him.

It's still true today; those of you who've been joining in with our Lent groups will clearly recognise this as part of 'God's story'.

If you're Christlike, Christian followers; people will want to know 'What makes you different??' And, when they hear your story, they'll want to

come and meet Jesus for themselves.

Jesus recognised the significance of that moment, and replied 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified' - in effect, He was saying: 'Watch out! Change is on the way.'

Jesus' love and salvation is open to everyone, not just a select group.

He also began talking about His impending death in a parable - 'Unless a kernel of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains all by itself. But, if it dies it will produce lots of fruit.'

The seeds and fruits Jesus was talking about are, of course, the seeds and fruits of His kingdom. Jesus continued: 'If anyone serves me, they must follow me. Where I am, my servants will be too. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour them. The hour has come.'

'Now my heart is troubled' Jesus said (He was obviously thinking ahead to His impending crucifixion) 'What am I going to say? Father save me from this moment? No! It was because of this that I came to this moment. Father glorify your name!' And, a voice from heaven responded: 'I have glorified it - and I will glorify it again!'

That was an earth shattering moment. Apparently some people thought the voice sounded like thunder. Others, possibly more perceptive, said: 'No, it was an angel talking to him!'

Jesus explained: 'That voice came for your sake, not mine.' You see, Jesus knew exactly what was about to happen. But, His disciples needed all the reassurance they could get - that God was still in charge!

I find that really encouraging, because it means all my doubts and inadequacies will be underpinned and boosted by the Holy Spirit. Despite our weakness, we have the assurance our efforts will be strengthened - because Jesus promises us: 'My Father will honour the one

who serves.'

This is the only time in John's Gospel that our Father God is spoken of as honouring people and the promise is specifically for 'the one who serves'.

We should give humble and hearty thanks, because now we know we're not working on our own, but in partnership with Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, who is an amazing force for good.

As believers we're told to share the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus, with everyone. We often feel fearful about that, but in the reading Jesus affirms - however weak we are, the Holy Spirit will empower us to do His work.

Let's continue to seek His help, and go forward in prayerful faith ... to share the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus with everyone we meet.

That's vital in these troubled times because only Jesus brings hope and salvation to everyone who turns to Him

**Let's pray**