

JEREMIAH 31:33-³³"This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

JOHN 12:20-36 ²⁰ Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." ²² Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³ Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Very 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. ²⁵ Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever 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. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." ²⁹ The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." ³⁰ Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people^[a] to myself." ³³ He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. ³⁴ The crowd answered him, "We have heard from the law that the Messiah^[b] remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" ³⁵ Jesus said to them, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. ³⁶ While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light."

LAST WEEK ON FACEBOOK, THERE WAS A VIDEO POST OF YOUNG CHILDREN, MOSTLY BABIES AND TODDLERS, WHO COULD SEE FOR THE FIRST TIME AFTER GETTING EYE GLASSES.

THE MOST MEMORABLE ONE WAS OF A BABY BOY UNDER A YEAR OLD WHO WAS SITTING IN A BABY CARRIER- CRYING.

HE WIGGLED HIS HEAD TO RESIST HAVING THE GLASSES STRAPPED ON HIS HEAD, AND PUT HIS LITTLE HANDS UP AS IF TO TRY TO TAKE THEM OFF.

BUT THEN HE OPENED HIS EYES FULLY, AND HIS WORLD CHANGED.

TEARS TURNED TO SMILES AS HE COULD, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS YOUNG LIFE, SEE CLEARLY. THEN WONDER SHOWED ON HIS FACE.

THIS CAN BE A METAPHOR FOR PEOPLE TODAY WHO SEE JESUS AS LORD AND SAVIOR, AND DISCOVER THEIR WORLD HAS CHANGED.

BUT SEEING JESUS IS NOT EASY. WE HAVE NO PHOTOGRAPHS OF HIM, NOR HAVE WE MET HIM IN THE FLESH.

WE CAN ONLY SEE HIM THROUGH SCRIPTURE AND WITH THE EYES OF FAITH, THROUGH THE HELP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THIS MEANS OUR PERCEPTION OF HIM CAN VARY FROM PERSON TO PERSON, AND EVEN WITHIN OURSELVES DEPENDING ON THE SPIRITUAL INSIGHT WE RECEIVE.

AND THERE ARE TIMES WE ARE LIKE THE LITTLE CHILDREN WHOSE VIEW OF THE WORLD WAS AT BEST CLOUDED, THEN SUDDENLY THE HOLY SPIRIT OPENS OUR EYES AND WE SEE JESUS IN A NEW OR CLEARER WAY.

IN PARTICULAR WE MAY HAVE BE ABLE TO SEE JESUS MORE AND MORE, AS HE IS- AND NOT AS WE WISH HIM TO BE.

THE MARATHANA SINGERS HAVE A PRAISE SONG THAT SPEAKS TO THE DEEPER REQUEST OF THOSE WANTING TO SEE JESUS.

“OPEN OUR EYES LORD, WE WISH TO SEE JESUS, TO REACH OUT AND TOUCH HIM AND SAY THAT WE LOVE HIM.

OPEN OUR EARS LORD, AND TEACH US TO LISTEN. OPEN OUR EYES LORD, WE WISH TO SEE JESUS.”

TODAY WE HEARD IN THE GOSPEL PASSAGE ABOUT TWO NON-JEWISH MEN WHO ASKED TO SEE JESUS.

IN OTHER WORDS, THEY WANTED TO MEET WITH HIM FACE TO FACE, AND NOT MERELY LOOK AT HIM FROM A DISTANCE.

SO PHILIP AND ANDREW TELL JESUS ABOUT THE REQUEST. BUT JESUS DOES NOT DIRECTLY SAY WHETHER OR NOT THE GREEKS CAN SEE HIM.

INSTEAD, THE SAVIOR, WHO PREVIOUSLY HAD SAID MANY TIMES- HIS HOUR HAD NOT YET COME, DECLARES, “THE HOUR HAS COME FOR THE SON OF MAN TO BE GLORIFIED.”

HE THEN LAUNCHES INTO A DISCOURSE ABOUT DYING SEEDS PRODUCING MUCH FRUIT.

HE ALSO TALKS ABOUT LOVING VS HATING, AND SAVING VS LOSING ONE’S LIFE.

JESUS WARNS THOSE WHO WISH TO FOLLOW HIM THAT THEY WILL HAVE TO MAKE SOME SACRIFICES, BECAUSE SERVANTS MUST FOLLOW THEIR MASTER.

AND FINALLY JESUS PROCLAIMS THAT THE SON OF MAN WILL BE LIFTED UP, AND LIKE A MAGNET DRAWS METAL, HE WILL DRAW PEOPLE TO HIMSELF- BY DYING ON THE CROSS.

MEANWHILE, SOME OF US MAY BE WONDERING- WHAT ABOUT THE GREEKS? DID JESUS ALLOW THEM NEAR HIM OR NOT?

WE ARE NOT TOLD ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, WHICH MAKES THE PASSAGE SEEM A LITTLE STRANGE.

INDEED, JESUS’ RESPONSE TO PHILIP’S AND ANDREW’S WORDS SEEM INCOMPREHENSIBLE UNTIL ONE UNDERSTANDS THE HIDDEN MEANING OF THE PHRASE “TO SEE”

IN THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN’S GOSPEL, THE CONCEPT OF SEEING JESUS- REFERS TO MORE THAN PHYSICAL SIGHT, IT INCLUDES SPIRITUAL INSIGHT.

IN OTHER WORDS, THOSE WHO REALLY SEE JESUS ARE THEY WHO COME TO KNOW AND BELIEVE IN HIM AS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, AND AS THE WORD MADE FLESH.

THEREFORE WE FIND THAT JESUS RESPONDED TO THE REQUEST TO SEE HIM- BY EXPLAINING WHAT IT MEANS TO REALLY SEE HIM, WHICH MEANS- TO BELIEVE IN HIM.

TO REALLY SEE JESUS IS TO BE TRANSFORMED BY HIM, TO BECOME A SEED OF GOD’S LOVE AND GRACE PLANTED IN THE WORLD SO WE MAY SPROUT, AND GROW, AND BEAR GOOD FRUIT.

BUT AS I SAID EARLIER, SEEING JESUS IN THE WAY HE SAYS WE NEED TO SEE HIM IS NOT EASY.

THE PROBLEM IS, NO MATTER HOW MUCH SOME PEOPLE WANT TO CLAIM HE IS- JESUS IS NOT A SUPPORTER OF ANY POLITICAL PARTY OR PHILOSOPHY.

NOR IS HE THE MASCOT OR LEADER OF ANY ONE RACE, ETHNIC GROUP, OR NATION.

JESUS IS NEITHER MORE NOR LESS OUR SAVIOR AND THE SAVIOR OF PEOPLE LIKE US, THAN HE IS LIKE EVERY OTHER HUMAN BEING WHO IS DRAWN TO HIM BY FAITH.

AND FAITH, ALONG WITH SCRIPTURE, ARE THE LENSES THROUGH WHICH WE ARE MEANT TO SEE JESUS UNTIL HIS PROMISED PHYSICAL RETURN, OR UNTIL HE GREET'S US IN HEAVEN.

SO, WHAT CAN WE LEARN ABOUT JESUS IN THE PAGES OF THE BIBLE? WHAT INSIGHT DOES SCRIPTURE GIVE US TO THE PERSON AND MISSION OF JESUS OF NAZARETH?

THE GOSPELS DO NOT GIVE US MUCH INFORMATION ABOUT JESUS' PERSONALITY OR PERSONAL LIFE, BUT DO THEY DO OFFER US A GLIMPSE OF IT.

WE ARE TOLD JESUS LOVED CHILDREN, HE SPOKE WITH WOMEN AS WELL AS MEN.

HE WELCOMED SINNERS, AND OTHER OUTCASTS, AND EVEN RELIGIOUS LEADERS WHO SINCERELY SOUGHT TO LEARN FROM HIM.

HE WORKED HARD IN HIS MINISTRY, BUT HE ALSO WENT TO PARTIES- LIKE THE WEDDING IN CANA WHERE HE CHANGED WATER INTO WINE.

WE CAN SEE JESUS AS A MAN WHO ENJOYED THE FRIENDSHIP OF OTHERS, WHO WEPT, AND WAS ANGERED WHEN GOD'S TEMPLE WAS DEFILED.

SURELY HE ALSO LAUGHED, SANG, AND PLAYED GAMES, AT LEAST IN HIS YOUTH.

JESUS ABIDED BY THE LAW OF GOD, AND IN PARTICULAR FOLLOWED THE SPIRIT OR INTENT OF THE LAW.

HE IN FACT WAS, DEDICATED TO AND ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT, HIS MINISTRY OF TEACHING, PREACHING, AND HEALING, EVEN WHEN HE FACED OPPOSITION.

JESUS WAS A MAN OF PRAYER. HE WAS FOCUSED ON DOING THE WILL OF HIS FATHER SO THAT THE WORLD GOD SO LOVES COULD BE SAVED THROUGH HIM.

IT MUST ALSO BE SAID THAT JESUS DID NOT GO TO HIS DEATH HAPPILY.

JESUS DID NOT HATE HIS LIFE IN THE SENSE THAT HE WANTED TO DIE TO BE FREE FROM IT.

BUT RATHER HE WENT TO HIS DEATH WILLINGLY AND WITH DETERMINATION- OUT OF OBEDIENCE TO GOD HIS FATHER, SO HE MIGHT DRAW ALL PEOPLE TO HIMSELF.

IN OTHER WORDS WHEN PEOPLE BOTH JEWS AND NON-JEWS SEE, THAT IS BELIEVE IN HIM AND ACCEPT THE PURPOSE OF HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION, THEY WILL COME TO HIM AND RECEIVE THE GIFT OF LIFE ONLY HE CAN OFFER.

THEREFORE, IT IS IN THIS SENSE WE ARE NOT TO LOVE, BUT RATHER HATE OUR LIFE.

WE ARE TO LET GO OF THE MANY THINGS IN LIFE THAT DISTRACT US FROM REALLY SEEING JESUS, AND THUS KEEP US FROM TRULY EMBRACING ETERNAL LIFE.

THUS TO LOVE ONE'S LIFE MEANS TO ALWAYS PUT PERSONAL COMFORT AND SAFETY FIRST.

IT IS TO DO OR SAY THINGS IN ORDER TO GET SOME KIND OF MATERIAL OR EMOTIONAL SATISFACTION IN OUR LIVES.

BUT TO HATE ONE'S LIFE MEANS WE ARE WILLING TO GIVE OURSELVES TO GOD AND TO LIVE LIKE JESUS DID- IN SERVICE TO GOD'S GLORY.

IT IS TO FOLLOW THE LEAD OF JOHN THE BAPTIST WHO SAID, ABOUT JESUS IN JOHN 3:30- "HE MUST INCREASE BUT I MUST DECREASE."

THE PROPHET JEREMIAH DRAWS OUR ATTENTION TO THE REASON FOR THIS WHEN HE DECLARED THAT GOD WILL WRITE HIS LAW ON OUR HEARTS.

AND, THE PROMISED A NEW COVENANT, SPOKEN ABOUT BY THE PROPHET, INCLUDES THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN.

JESUS, AS WE KNOW IS THE ONE THROUGH WHOM THIS NEW COVENANT IS ENACTED, BY HIS SACRIFICE ON THE CROSS.

UNFORTUNATELY, TOO MANY PEOPLE FAIL TO SEE JESUS AS GOD'S MESSENGER OF LOVE AND FORGIVENESS TO ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE, AND NOT JUST PEOPLE LIKE THEM.

IN FACT OVER THE LAST SEVERAL MONTHS, IF NOT FOR LONGER, THE NEWS HAS BEEN FULL OF EXAMPLES THIS.

MANY, ON ALL SIDES OF THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SPECTRUM, WHO PROCLAIM TO BE CHRISTIAN, HAVE NOT SPOKEN OR ACTED AS IF THEY REALLY DO SEE JESUS.

A POSSIBLE REASON FOR THIS LACK OF INSIGHT INTO THE SAVIOR IS FOUND IN THE RESULTS OF A TEST IN A COLLEGE CLASS ON "JESUS OF NAZARETH."

THE PROFESSOR GAVE A TEST ON THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS THAT ASKED THE STUDENTS TO IMAGINE WHAT JESUS WAS LIKE, BY ANSWERING QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW THEY THINK HE WAS, AS A REAL PERSON.

ONE QUESTION WAS: "WOULD JESUS PREFER TO GO HIS OWN WAY, RATHER THAN ACT BY THE RULES?"

ANOTHER QUESTION ASKED, "WAS JESUS A WORRIER? AND THERE WERE A FEW OTHER SIMILAR TYPES OF QUESTIONS.

THE SECOND PART OF THE PAPER ASKED THE STUDENTS TO ANSWER THOSE SAME QUESTIONS FOR THEMSELVES.

THE TEST RESULTS SHOWED ALMOST ALL THE STUDENTS ANSWERED BOTH SETS OF QUESTIONS IN A SIMILAR WAY.

THEIR RESPONSES INDICATE THAT THEY THOUGHT JESUS WAS A LOT LIKE THEM.

THE PROBLEM WITH THIS IS- RATHER THAN TRYING TO REALLY SEE JESUS, THEY VIEWED HIM AS BEING WHO THEY WERE, AND HOW THEY WANTED HIM TO BE.

THIS ACTUALLY IS VERY MUCH LIKE MOST, IF NOT ALL, OF CHRIST'S CONTEMPORARIES.

HIS DISCIPLES, FAMILY, FRIENDS, NEIGHBORS, AND HIS OPPONENTS ALL SAW JESUS THROUGH THEIR OWN HOPES OR FEARS, FAITH OR DOUBT. AND SO, THEY NEVER REALLY SAW OR UNDERSTOOD HIM.

IN ALL FAIRNESS TO ALL OF THOSE WHO SAW JESUS IN THE FLESH, NONE OF THEM HAD THE INSIGHT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT UNTIL AFTER HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

BUT WE DO HAVE THE SPIRIT AVAILABLE TO US, AS WELL AS THE SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS.

WHAT WE SOMETIMES LACK, IS THE DESIRE TO SEE JESUS THROUGH THE LENS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, RATHER THAN BY OUR HUMAN UNDERSTANDING ALONE.

LIKE THE BABY IN THE OPENING ILLUSTRATION WE SOMETIMES RESIST THE CHANCE TO SEE JESUS MORE CLEARLY.

SOMETIMES WE ARE COMFORTABLE WITH OUR PERSPECTIVE OF HIM AND OTHER TIMES WE MAY FEAR THE CHANGE NEW INSIGHT COULD BRING.

OUR CHALLENGE IS TO BE OPEN TO GOD'S LEADING, TO WELCOME THE GIFT OF SIGHT HE OFFERS, EVEN IF IT MAKES US UNCOMFORTABLE AT FIRST.

AND REMEMBER, A WILLINGNESS TO STEP OUT OF OUR COMFORT ZONE WHEN GOD LEADS US TO DO SO, IS A FORM OF SACRIFICE, OF LOSING ONE'S LIFE.

THE FIRST VERSE THE HYMN, "BE THOU MY VISION" OFFERS US A PRAYER TO HELP US SEE JESUS MORE CLEARLY, BY EXPRESSING THE DESIRE TO SEE JESUS AS HE IS, AND TO BE GUIDED BY HIS LIGHT.

"BE THOU MY VISION, O LORD OF MY HEART; NAUGHT BE ALL ELSE TO ME SAVE WHAT THOU ART.

THOU MY BEST THOUGHT BY DAY OR BY NIGHT. WAKING OR SLEEPING THY PRESENCE MY LIGHT."

MAY WE EACH BE WILLING TO SEE JESUS WITH EYES AND MINDS OPENED BY GOD'S SPIRIT. AMEN

SERMON SUMMARY: JOHN 12:20-36

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WHEN HE IS TOLD ABOUT THEM THE SAVIOR LAUNCHES INTO A DISCOURSE ABOUT DYING SEEDS PRODUCING MUCH FRUIT. HE ALSO TALKS ABOUT LOVING VS HATING, AND SAVING VS LOSING ONE'S LIFE. JESUS WARNS THOSE WHO WISH TO FOLLOW HIM THAT THEY WILL HAVE TO MAKE SOME SACRIFICES, BECAUSE SERVANTS MUST FOLLOW THEIR MASTER.

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SO, WHAT CAN WE LEARN ABOUT JESUS IN THE PAGES OF THE BIBLE? SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS ARE THESE:

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