

Sunday of the Passion  
April 9, 2017

Text: John 12:20-43  
Theme: Glory Gazing

People can get excited at catching just a glimpse of something or someone. It could be a rare occurrence like a total solar eclipse. It could be a seldom seen animal such as a Siberian tiger in the wild. Maybe it is a famous person like the President of the United States, or the Queen of England, or the Pope. Seeing such people is not an everyday event unless you are Melania Trump, or Prince Philip, or a member of the Swiss Guard. Not just everyone gets an audience with such folks.

Today we see some Greeks who wish to see Jesus. Likely they have already seen Him from a distance. He has not been in hiding. They are seeking a more personal, up-close audience. Maybe they considered themselves quite important to make such a request to see the most sought after man in Jerusalem at the time.

We do have aids to help us see things in general. We have glasses and we have goggles. Goggles are more for protecting our eyes and glasses are usually for correcting our eyesight. Corrective vision could give you a much better experience if you finally got to see that person you have been waiting to see for such a long time. We all need corrective vision when it comes to seeing, really seeing Jesus. It is a correction that Jesus longs to give. Such correction is not sought without help. We need an aid for us to see our need for aid in seeing. That need for correction can be deemed

incorrect, not needed, and not wanted. The fuzziness and even the darkness may be preferred.

Again, these Greeks wish to see Jesus. Yes, they probably have seen and heard, maybe had joined in with what was to be seen and heard. Did they lift their voices in the shout, “Hosanna, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.” (John 12:13) The palms and the accolades gave evidence that those in the crowd hoped to see something big, really big. Jesus was seen as the hope to get them restored to and exceed the glory that was Israel’s in the days of David. This prophet from Nazareth could well be the one. He was the one doing all the signs. He has brought sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and restoration to the crippled. He had even raised the dead. Lazarus was living, walking proof. Was this indeed the one the prophets had written of, prophets like Isaiah and Zechariah.

These Greeks were interested in the religion of the Jews, quite interested. After all, they had come to the feast. Did they want to have a part in the coming glory days? Did they want to see Jesus to make some sort of personal appeal? Those of Israel were expecting big things from the coming one. Each hoped to have a part of , probably a big part of the plenty to come. It would be a time of peace, security, and plenty. It would be glorious.

Would goggles be needed, glory goggles? Would it be there would be such much plenty flying around one would need goggles for protection? No, it’s more that goggles would be needed to accommodate the eyes

bugging out of the big heads swelled with the importance of me. They could be of value from scuffles resulting from those who had a different opinion as just to who was the greatest. Who should have the bigger plate and the better place at the banquet? Who would deserve it more than, well, me. Yes, glory goggles anticipating the glory days.

This is quite different from what Paul puts before us in our lesson from Philippians 2. “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 2:5) This is a humble mind, mind directing to service. In the verses that come right before we read, “Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not to his own interest, but also to the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:3, 4) This is a call to put away selfishness. Of course this is hard to do, goes against the inborn bent toward me! Jesus can even become another opportunity to scratch me itch, a way to further my agenda. Perhaps he can add a little value to my life, bring a tad bit more glory. I can see that happening as I look through my glory goggles.

Those Greeks weren't the only ones observing Jesus. For the authorities these were guarded days. This whole Jesus business had gotten too big and there seemed to be no stopping it. Jesus' entrance had been one that you could not help by notice. There were those, seems to be a substantial group, that just couldn't stop talking of how Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. In the verse right before our text we read, “So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing.

Look, the whole world has gone after him.” (John 12:19) They would spend the next few days trying to make some gains. They would team up with those they weren’t overly fond of, the Sadducees. With them they would try their hardest and their smartest, even their trickiest, to discredit him, trip him in his words. But they got nowhere with that, except the shamed a bit.

Jesus was a threat to their glory. For the Pharisees he was a threat to their glory as respected, even revered teachers. They really did value the praise of one another. No one, wanted to be put out of the synagogue. There were those among them who believed there was something to this Jesus, but weren’t ready to suffer that expulsion from the synagogue, so they kept their opinions to themselves. The chief priests, Caiaphas the chief among the chiefs, could only see bad happening. The Romans would come to put down what they perceived as insurrection. This would be bad for all, especially bad as they would lose their glorious way of life.

Glory goggles were a hot item. There were different ideas of that glory was, but it was all human centered. Glory goggle are still big sellers. People sacrifice more than they know to wear them.

Jesus speaks about glory today. It is a glory that can only be beneficially viewed by corrected sight. We need glory glasses. There is that glory of God that is total awesomeness. Is this what was attracting the Greeks? They had surely heard of the sign of Lazarus, maybe even talked to him. Did they come with there own glory goggles seeking Jesus, or was there more? They wish to see Jesus. Jesus wished, wishes, to be seen, but

not through our glory goggles. He wants us to see first of all the glory of His service.

He does have the glory of God. That's how it works when you are God. This is the blazing glory of pure holiness. Peter, James, and John got a peek at that on the mountain of transfiguration. Humans, sinful humans, can only see this veiled, bright as it may be. The full glory would be fatal to us. Yes, Jesus was in very nature God, but did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, not something to show off like war booty. He came not to condemn the world but to save the world. He comes as a servant. He returns one day in all that blazing glory.

He came in the glory of service of One who is obedient to the Father, even obedient unto death on a cross. He cries out that He has come not to be saved from the hour of suffering, but to go through it, the purpose for which he has come. He asks the Father to glorify the Father's name. The Father answers audibly, an answer that puzzles the hearers. Now what is about to transpire will puzzle and alarm many, "Now is judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted from the earth, will draw all people to myself." (John 12:32) Jesus will pray in words we find in John 17, "I have glorified you [the Father] on earth, having accomplished the work you gave me to do." (John 17:4)

There will be quite the sight to see, a sight that looked far from glorious. It will not be on a throne, but on a cross by the end of the week. The cry of the crowd we remember on this day, "Blessed is He who comes

in the name of the Lord,” is found in Psalm 118. It is speaking of going up to the temple to make sacrifice. (Psalm 118:26) The Lord is going up to make sacrifice, going up to sacrifice self,

*Stricken, smitten, and afflicted, See Him dying on the tree!*

*'Tis the Christ, by man rejected; Yes, my soul, 'tis He, 'tis He!*

*'Tis the long-expected Prophet, David's Son, yet David's Lord;*

*Proofs I see sufficient of it: 'Tis the true and faithful Word.*

(LSB Hymn 451, stanza 1)

There is glory in the gory, not a glorious gory, but glory in the work of God is being accomplished. Here we see the full extent of God's love. It is for us and our salvation. God longs for us to see. The Greeks wished to see Jesus. Again, Jesus wishes to be seen, seen as Savior. This has always been God's desire. We read in our text of the blinding and hardening of Israel, this was a blinding and hardening of their choosing. God held out His hands all the day and they just kept turning away. There was always a cure for their blindness, but they preferred the darkness, didn't want to come into the light.

We can think of this blindness in a way as being like cataracts. There is a fix for that.

A cataract is a cloudiness in the lens of the eye. It can be removed and replaced, that lens. Now there is light, clarity. One can refuse to have it removed. It won't get any better, Actually, continued exposure to the light (ultraviolet) can make it worse. We were afflicted with the cloudiness of

unbelief. The law is like a laser that cuts to the cloudiness. The Holy Spirit works through the Gospel to give us that new lens of faith. In this faith we look upon the One lifted up on the cross, the One lifted up from the grave, the One lifted up to the right hand of the Father.

Yes, God gives us glory glasses. We have light to walk in now here below. Those made new in Christ do have the mind of Christ. It is the attitude of humility. We bear one another's burdens as we walk in the light. Our walking in the light is not in trying to be good enough for God. In a way that would just be putting back on the glory goggles, trying to advance self, only serving others in as far as it served me. God has declared us to be clean. We are holy, washed and clothed in Christ. We are the hand of our Lord to serve those around us. We are light to attract, not like the blazing bulb that draws moths, but the more like the campfire that attracts boy scouts to its warmth and glow.

We experience the glory of service even now. We do it not as glory seekers, but as Jesus followers. It's a good way of life, a full life, true even when the path of our life takes an unexpected and unwanted turn. Our focus will be on Jesus. Yes, one day we will see Him in all His glory, no filters needed. When He returns we will be made like Him for we will see Him as He is—no self-deceiving goggles, and no corrective glasses needed, renewed eyes wide open in wonder. For Jesus' sake. Amen