



Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

Fifth Sunday in Lent

March 18, 2018

In Jerusalem

John 12:20-36

The Time of Lent draws soon to a close, these 40 days of introspection and discernment of the price paid for our salvation. For today, the reading from John (written some 50 years after Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension) marks a tipping point as He arrived in Jerusalem. And as He entered the city, with His own, the festival was near and...

1. Crowds Surround. Imagine how it must have been as events seemed to increase in pace, especially for those first called to follow as disciple/learners of Jesus.

Days had been filled with nearly three years of formation as they listened and watched, shared and became part of those whose intimacy in fellowship must have been remarkable.

With the context of the first three Gospels, we know that as they drew closer to Jerusalem, Jesus became much more specific about what He, what they, would experience in His death. Recall that Peter had confessed that He believed that "Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Along ways from leaving the nets to the clear confession that, in Jesus, God had visited earth with singleness of purpose.

God's love and mercy becomes ever clear---TO LIVE WITH HUMANKIND, TO BRING BACK ALL OF CREATION TO A RIGHTEOUS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, THROUGH A NEW COVENANT/PROMISE after the words of Jeremiah, from the LORD: "I will put my law within them, and I will write I on their hearts: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more."

So it is, that one a day of turning, Philip receives a request from some Greeks---

2. "We would see Jesus." The coming of the Greeks marks the coming of the hour, the hour of crucifixion, which is the hour of victory when God's glory is brought to earth, to all believers, And Jesus teaches that "The time is NOW."

It is as if Jesus brings everything to the pivot point on Calvary:

- ✠ "It has arrived." First words of Jesus here (perfect tense) which is bookended by His final words "It is finished!" (perfect tense) = COMPLETED.

- ✠ With the language of creation he sums the meaning of His death --- His glorification. As in the image of grains of wheat which die in the ground and rise with much fruit. Grain dies, life follows and it is so as Jesus once again extends the call: "IF AN INDIVIDUAL WANTS TO SERVE ME, HERE IS HOW: FOLLOW ME! And then wherever I am, there my servant will be as well. And if anyone serves me, oh will the Father honor that person!"
- ✠ The key is the relationship in the next verses as we are caught up in heavenly dialogue, like Gethsemane, this is the moment: "Father, I am ready in this hour to die and be glorified." In Christ, in His death, in His Cross, our burial too that we might be raised up too into new life. (A clear image of the water promise of Holy Baptism.)
- ✠ Net result: the powers of the world are neutralized, thrown down. All that will ever assail us is power deprived as He is hoisted to the Cross and all will be drawn into salvation, redeemed in mercy, and lifted in that love which has no end.

3. Children of the Light. As we come closer to the Friday as call "Good." As our Time of Lent gives way to Easter.

It is the Light that becomes the power of the Holy Spirit in the midst of darkness. And the focus of it all is the Cross.

"People, I am Light," said Jesus, "Walk with me in what seems all darkness." Literal translation of the verses sound this way: "While you have the Light, please believe into the Light, so that you may become children of the Light."

In this present age, there is much that I cannot understand---the raging wars among people, the separation between people through economic position, social separation, actions of anger, and words that divide and cut among people, where the common good is distorted and avoided for personal gain, and where truth is often hedged in words that lead to anxiety, despair, fear and doubt that God is much interested in world any more.

The Cross means to be a point of unity and where reconciliation can renew the face of earth through those who hearts become the seat of love which encircles and enfolds all.

It is to that we are drawn through this Gospel word. We are, beloved, a colony of heaven on earth. And we are those who become beacons of the kind of peace, that is fed by love, lived in joy and thrives in hope!

Athanasius, teacher of the earliest Church and practitioner of the Gospel, once wrote: "As Jesus spread out his hands on the cross, he drew the ancient people of the old covenant with one hand and the Gentiles of the new covenant with the other, uniting them in himself."

It is in that truth that we live in mission with confidence and courage that, in our witness and serving, others too might begin to live into the Light we know in Jesus Christ, Amen!