

TEXT: So these came to Philip, who was from Bethesda in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

John 12:21

WE WOULD SEE JESUS IN HIS TRUST IN THE FATHER

We would see Jesus. You may have noticed on the altar or the communion table in some churches, two capital letters, the an "A", and the other a strange symbol not found in our English language. These two letters are ALPHA and OMEGA, the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet. Their meaning is clear to us. They say that Jesus is the "A" and "Z" of our Christian faith. If we want to know what God is like, we look to Jesús. If we want to know what we should be like, we look to Jesus. If we want to know the meaning of life, we look to Jesus. Our faith centers in him.

Men for nearly two thousand years have looked to Jesus as their ideal. Many characterizations have been made of his greatness. During this Lenten season, we have seen Jesus in his life of prayer, in his confidence in people, in his spirit of forgiveness, and in his reliance on love. Soaring above all these traits and giving point and inspiration to them, was his irresistible faith and trust in the divine Father. Tonight, we would see Jesus in his trust in the Father.

CHRIST IN GETHSEMANE

The painting of "Christ in Gethsemane" by Hofmann is a beautiful and well known painting.

Mr. Brink read for us this evening, the portion of Scripture which undoubtedly inspired this painting. Perhaps no other scene in the life of Jesus portrays so well his trust in the Father.

The Garden of Gethsemane, located on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives, was probably a private garden belonging to some friend of the Master's. It was a place that Jesus often went to in order to get away from the noise, and confusion of the city.

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SCOTIA 2, NEW YORK

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Here the artist portrays Jesus kneeling with outstretched, clasped hands on a barren rock. He was alone with a decision so crucial and so far reaching that it could only be shared with God. The advice of his friends was not useful.

This experience was the most terrible that Jesus ever passed through. He had faced moments of anxiety before, moments of storm and stress, of personal danger. THE STRUGGLE OF JESUS IN GETHSEMANE WAS THE ATTEMPT TO HARMONIZE HIS OWN PERSONAL WILL WITH A FATE THAT NOW SEEMED TO BE HIS FATHER'S WILL. It was to accept a course of events, the purpose of which he couldn't quite understand. It wasn't to avoid the tortures of the cross, but rather drinking the cup of failure which was even more bitter than death. IF HE DIED, what would become of that vision of the Kingdom of love and brotherhood? What would become of his disciples who had hardly grasped the first principles of the Kingdom of Righteousness? How much easier it would have been to have gone back to Galilee and ^{taught} teach quietly in the small obscure towns.

See him kneeling there in prayer. Not far away are the slumbering disciples. What agony he must have been passing through. Great drops of sweat are on his brow. What agony he must have been passing through. "OH FATHER, IF IT BE POSSIBLE LET THIS CUP PASS FROM ME." There was cry - to flee from this experience. But very soon there came the steady resolute words: "NEVERTHELESS NOT MY WILL, BUT THINE BE DONE."

It has been said that the outcome of this struggle was a victory of faith over sight, a surrender of His entire personal interests and the interests of the Kingdom into the Father's keeping. Here we see Jesus in his great trust in the Father.

JESUS AND HIS
CLOSENESS TO GOD.

Behind this great faith in the Father, there was a life....a life that was lived in close communion with God.

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Jesus was very close to God. God was more real to him than his mother Mary, his brothers and sisters, and even the carpenter's shop where he worked.

This closeness to God began quite early in his life. We don't know just when it started, but we do know that when he was only twelve, he said, "DID YOU NOT KNOW THAT I MUST BE IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE?" Strange words, especially for a twelve year old boy. Some twenty years later, when he started his public ministry, he said, "MY FOOD IS TO DO THE WILL OF HIM WHO SENT ME, AND TO ACCOMPLISH HIS WORK." Two years later, in the torture of the crucifixion, he spoke the words of quiet triumph, "IT IS FINISHED." From start to finish, God, the love of God, and the will of God were the chief facts in his life.

As the days passed by, the conviction must have dawned upon these early disciples that in seeing Jesus they were seeing more than just an ordinary man. They were glimpsing God himself. Imagine how they must have felt.....

How their eyes must have stared at him, as they saw him in this new light.....

How their minds must have stretched to take in the wonderful new thoughts he was giving them.....

How awe-struck they must have been as they heard him say,
"I AND THE FATHER ARE ONE."

Here in this carpenter's son from Nazareth was the mighty God, walking up and down the dusty roads of Palestine by their side. This is what God was like.....loving, tender, strong, merciful, caring for people, and suffering and dying with them.

They had to find words to catch up this world changing experience. And they found them. They called him "Emmanuel" which means God with us. They went even further. They called him the Son of God. How the impulsive Peter must have gasped as he said, "THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD."

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Whatever else the words meant to Peter, or the millions who have repeated them since that day, they have surely carried the conviction that Jesus was as much like God in spirit and in nature as a son can possibly be like his Father.

If people had not found God in him, and continued to find God through him, he would probably have been forgotten long ago. He would be just another prophet, another teacher, another good man. The Christian faith has seen more in him. It has been unable to imagine anyone more God-like than Jesus.

Jesus was so close to God, that we call him the Son of God. This is the very heart of our faith, at its highest and its best.

JESUS AND HIS

CONCEPTION OF GOD.

Having observed his closeness to God, now let us examine his conception of God.

We find that Jesus said very little about the metaphysical attributes of God. Theological problems didn't seem to bother him. He always kept before him the real problems that men and women had to face.

Jesus looked upon God as a Father. It's interesting to note that in the ninety-nine names that the Mohammedans have for God, not one of these is Father. Jesus taught us when we pray to say, "Our Father". This was the very heart of his idea of God.

Can't you picture Jesus walking through the fields of Galilee in the springtime when everything was in bloom. See him pointing to the lillies dotting the fields, and bordering the dusty roads, and telling his disciples that the hand of God created them. Picture him looking up into the sky, watching the birds. "THEY NEVER SOW NOR REAP NOR STORE IN BARN, AND YET YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER FEEDS THEM. AREN'T YOU MUCH MORE VALUABLE THAN THEY ARE?"

Jesus said that God cares. Nothing was so small as to escape God's care and attention. He knows when each sparrow fall to the ground

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ending its little chapter of life. He cares for men and women, each of whom is precious in his sight.

Mr. Paton in one of his books tells a story of a woman in India who was being taught the Lord's prayer. She got as far as the invocation, "OUR FATHER", and then said to the missionary who was teaching her, "IS THAT REALLY TRUE.....IS THIS GOD A FATHER?" He assured her that it was. Then she said, "I DON'T THINK I NEED TO LEARN ANY MORE". The words, Our Father, had changed everything for her. The world is God's, and He is the Father. This is the basic fact about the world in which we live.

Each person has great value in the God's sight. With this great Christian truth concerning the sacredness of human personality, how can we in our own time neglect the outcast, or the enslaved peoples of the world. How can we ever doubt whether the black man has a soul? Or overlook the great slums of many of our cities.

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WHAT DOES THIS MEAN
FOR US?

God is a Father. This was the very heart of Jesus' idea of God. What meaning is there in all of this for us?

I feel that it is a priceless privilege to believe in a God like the one which Jesus revealed to us. I often think that if that's the kind of spirit behind everything, then we need not worry.

We may fall ill; people close to us may die; the world may descend into the bloody depths of war; but everything is in good hands. God certainly can't save us from all pain and sorrow, but his care goes with us all the way.

One of the most able churchmen ever produced in America was Bishop William Quayle. He was often referred to as "The Skylark of Methodism." The man was eloquent, poetic, and full of good humor. Once he described in a sermon how he had faced a problem one night that seemed too difficult to solve. He prayed, but his prayers seemed to get nowhere. He lay on his bed and tossed, unable to sleep. Then he said, about midnight God spoke to him and said: "Now William, you go to sleep and let Me sit up for the rest of the night."

I read in yesterday's newspaper that the British liner, the Queen Mary, arrived in Southampton, England on Monday after a nightmare Atlantic crossing. Passengers were flung from their beds as the ship rolled at a forty-eight degree angle. Some 6,000 pieces of crockery were smashed. This reminded me of the fact that the most violent storms sweeping the ocean disturb the water only a few hundred feet below the surface. Below the troubled waves, there is peace and calmness. In a similar way, the one who gets beneath the surface of life and lives in the spiritual depths can find the peace of God that passes the understanding of man. Jesus found it, and we can find it too.

I would like to tell you a story about a newspaper man whose name was Jack Appleton. He was regarded as a saint by many of his friends. For seventeen years of his life he wrestled with an incurable disease,

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and for seven years of that time, he lay helpless in bed. His room became a place of encouragement and inspiration, and his poems, with their note of "quiet courage" traveled far. One day Jack was asked this question, "WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU CAN'T TOUCH BOTTOM?" "THEN I SWIM," he replied. "AND WHEN YOU CAN'T SWIM?" "WHY THEN I FLOAT - AND," he added, "UNDERNEATH ARE THE EVERLASTING ARMS." Around us and beneath us are the everlasting arms. This is no guarantee against misfortune. It is rather the confidence that, whatever happens, nothing can really harm us. It's not the easy peace of dodging hard decisions, rather it is the contentment of facing everything squarely with God's help.

A loud peal of thunder in the middle of the night awoke a little three year old boy from a sound sleep. The lightening and the thunder frightened him. His hand shot through the crib and tugged the covers of the bed next to his. A big hand found his tiny trembling fingers and enclosed them within its strong grasp.

"IS THAT YOU, DADDY?" asked the excited little boy. "YES DEAR.... I'M HERE." "ALL RIGHT...." ~~came the answer from the cheerful, calm~~ voice. The storm continued to rage, but the little lad soon fell back to sleep assured that all was well so long as his hand rested in his father's. When we face life with the assurance that there is One who meets our outstretched hands, a strange peace comes to ~~the~~ soul.

One the last night of his life, under the shadow of the cross, Jesus told his disciples that he would give them his peace. His peace was a tranquility of spirit which results from committing oneself entirely to the keeping of God. Possessed with such a spirit of peace, we find fresh courage to tackle every trying situation. We find new power by which we can take the contrasting threads of joy and sorrow, triumph and defeat and weave them into the design of life.

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"Drop thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of thy peace."

LET US PRAY

Grant, O Lord, that what we have said with our lips and heard
with our ears, we may believe in our hearts, and what we
believe in our hearts, we may practice in our lives. Amen.

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