**Gospel**: John 12:20-36

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. 21They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” 22Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. 23Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24Very 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. 25Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor. “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. 28Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” 29The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” 30Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. 31Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. 32And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” 33He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

**Message**: We Wish to See Jesus

 Some Greeks came to Philip and said, “We wish to see Jesus.” These Greeks could have been Hellenist Jews in Jerusalem for Passover. They could also have been Gentile Greeks in town on business and having heard of this Jesus, took advantage of the opportunity to see him. Did these Greeks ever get to see or speak with Jesus? Scripture says Jesus spoke to Philip and Andrew about his “hour” that had come—the time when **all** people would seek him and be drawn to him. This is not a time of beautiful music, loud celebrations, and suddenly all is well with the world. This is the beginning of his glorification, his revelation/epiphany to the nations of the one God, Creator of all that is. This is a time of new and abundant life, but first one walks through the valley of suffering and death. This is the time when God in flesh personally experiences every possible horror humans inflict on each other.

 We come to worship most Sundays. Do we really wish to see Jesus? What would happen if Jesus actually appeared in this room? What if Jesus spoke to you, to me like he did with the Samaritan woman at the well and told us everything about our self, things we have tried to bury over the years, and maybe a few actions that deserve a pat on the back? Do we really wish to see Jesus? Why? What are we seeking? Is this the time when we walk through dark valleys wishing to see Jesus and hear Jesus’ voice say, “Fear not; I am with you, always.”

 Thursday of last week, I brought my son home. For almost six years our family experienced a kind of death. Now we experience a resurrection of sorts, a rebirth as we go forward together with God providing opportunity, guidance, courage and strength for a new and abundant life. But I want to spend some time on the seeking part. In those first moments six years ago, when he told me what was happening, I suggested he get his Grandfather’s Bible and start reading. He did, and has not looked back. I would send him a hard copy of my messages every week that I was in the pulpit. He did not hide it under a bushel. He shared it with others. In ways non-seekers might call “coincidence,” I was given names of others in prison. I did not know them, but there was a fine thread of connection, often surprising and very serendipitous. Would you write to them/me and send your sermons? As I was driving him to an appointment on Friday, he said that one of the guys, not on my mailing list, asked him before his release if I would send these messages/sermons to him now that R was no longer going to be there to share. (I’m guessing my son had shared.) These men, who are considered repugnant, the lowest of the low even in prison, are seeking Jesus, grabbing at any crumb or speck in those messages that ultimately give life and hope.

 Jesus continuously reminds us to “Fear not; I am with you.” Jesus **knows** suffering and death. Jesus knows our sufferings and our deaths. Jesus also says to put on your best face you can muster at the moment. Why? Because Jesus is going through it all with us. God is ever present. Some people have made the outer aspects of suffering an art form. Jesus chastised some of the Pharisees for going about in ashes and hang-dog expressions while fasting so everyone would see their feigned piety. “You’re gonna eat soon, buddy. Others can’t, and who’s responsible for that situation?” Jesus identifies with those who suffer. When he was baptized by John, a baptism of repentance, even though he was innocent, Jesus took on all the hatred, anger, jealousy, greed, lust of the world. On the cross all the fullness of God suffered all of this and more, **not** for **his** sake, but for our sake. Jesus’ cries and tears from Gethsemane to the cross were for more than the obvious when he knew there was great suffering and death in his immediate future. His cries and tears were for all humanity, all mortals, all creation facing not only physical death but the atrocities one inflicts on another.

 There is something in all of us that can, at any moment to any degree, allow us to act against our neighbor. There is also Jesus, if we truly seek him, who empowers us to love and influence others with correct actions and without judgment. We do **not** judge; we do **no**t label. We do not know the all underlying reasons for a neighbor’s actions. How might we (community, society) be complicit in whatever environmental or sociological conditions that propel another to such actions? How might we be complicit by not providing good counsel and offering the hand of friendship and support (shalom—we are family, children of God)? God chose the humility of the cross to, not only expose the evils of this world that abuse God, evils that bring God to cries and tears for our sake, but also and ultimately to triumph over evil and death. Through Jesus’ obedience, his absolute trust in God, Jesus was raised from the dead to new and abundant life—life where he can be always and everywhere for those who seek him. God on the cross removes our righteous indignation. God on the cross tells us to “hold on.” Is death the worst that can happen? Those who have died and are dying in recent horrific events are influencing lives among all nations. We see the horrors of war, the results of hatred and anger, the effects of lust for power. We also see the efforts of all trying to bring an end to suffering, means to bind the wounds and rebuild. We see the smiles of children waiting in a food line when they realize they are on camera. Whether our death is literal or figurative, our actions offer hope. We wish to see Jesus. We wish others to see Jesus. Put on your best face so Jesus may be seen in you, for you may be the only Jesus they will ever see in this life, and that will be enough.

**Prayers of the People/the Lord’s Prayer**: Almighty God, you are the shield of all who are oppressed. Hear us as we come to you with our concerns and our hopes for those who suffer. For the friendless and the lonely, the tempted and the unbelieving. Be merciful to those who are anxious and suffer in body, mind and soul. Protect with your holy presence those in danger and distress, those who have suffered loss. Let your love surround the infirm and the aged, those who are passing through that veil to be with you face to face. Continue with us as we continue to pray with Jesus the Christ, “Our Father . . .”

**Prayer of Thanksgiving**: Thank you, loving God, for going before us and behind us. Thank you for lifting us from below and raising us to unanticipated heights. Thank you for surrounding us with your love through Jesus Christ that our gifts, our words, our thoughts, our actions may reveal the beauty of your Holy Presence.

**Benediction**: May the road rise to meet you; may the wind be always at your back; may the sun shine warm upon your face; may the rains fall soft upon your fields, and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hand.

**Old Testament**: Jeremiah 31:27-34

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 32It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. 33But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34No 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.

**New Testament**: Hebrews 5:5-10

So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”; 6as he says also in another place, “You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.” 7In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; 9and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.