

Week 5: Seeing Clearly: New Horizons

Gospels:

John 12:20-33 Greeks visit Jesus who speaks of his death

John 5:1-18 The Paralytic Man

This week we witness the encounter between Jesus and the paralytic man, and Jesus and the Greeks who questioned him after his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

How is your pilgrimage going? Are you living with unanswered questions? Are you wondering where you will find hope? We travel in faith rather than certainty as we face the reality of the human condition and our dependence on God and others. We need, as a pilgrim community, to accept that we do not have all the answers, that we will often be walking into darkness, and that we will continue to be puzzled and confused as to which direction we should take. We need to be at home in our faith if we are to progress. The Greeks in this story remained bewildered, but the paralytic man went off developing his spiritual resources. In both of today's stories we see divine work: the work of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

The Greeks in today's story did not expect to talk about death. Likewise, the paralytic man probably didn't expect to encounter Jesus on that day. I am not sure why the Greeks wanted to see Jesus, but it is highly possible that the paralytic man had dreamed of such a healing encounter. After all, they say seeing is believing.

Christianity means participating in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is what Jesus sets before the Greeks who question him. If we want to see Jesus then we must look death in the face. Death is the gateway to new life. If we are to see clearly, there is a series of mini deaths to encounter.

When Jesus meets the paralytic man, he firstly forgives the man his sins and only then does he heal him of his paralysis. Jesus knew the paralytic man needed inner healing before physical healing. He had to be healed from the inside out. The man is healed and able to walk again, to continue his pilgrimage. Jesus later met the man in the temple and reminded him of the importance of "seeing clearly", by not sinning again.

Regardless of who or what in our life has died, Jesus has already opened up new horizons for us. As we continue our pilgrimage it is time to let ourselves be lifted up; lifted up in Christ's crucifixion, lifted up in his resurrection, lifted up in hope. We are but grains of wheat: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies..."

The Greeks Who Visit Jesus



Pulpit carving of St. Philip at his namesake church in Leicester, England. At the bottom is a quotation (John 12:21) recalling some Greeks who approached him, “Sir, we would see Jesus.” Philip found Andrew, and together they took them to Jesus.

The Paralytic Man



The paralytic sat languishing by the pool, thirty-eight years in his wretched condition, hoping for healing. When the pool's waters were stirred (by an angel, as everyone thought), he hoped to be the first one into the pool to soak up the angel's divine power and be cured, but being paralyzed, he was too slow, and someone always beat him to the pool. So, he waited and waited, hoping to find salvation one day in the pool.

It was there that Jesus found him. When Jesus asked him, "Do you want to be healed?" (John 5:6), he didn't say, "Yes Lord, please heal me!" He was still hoping to get into the pool, and he answered, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is troubled, and while I am going another steps down before me." But salvation wasn't in the pool. It was in Jesus. Jesus simply said, "Rise, take your pallet, and walk," and the man did. He didn't need the pool after all. All he needed was Jesus.

Discussion Starters:

1. What are the questions we have faced on our pilgrim journey?
2. When things become less clear for us and we struggle to find answers, how might we respond to these unanswered questions?
3. What are the painful passages for me as I make this journey? Where did/do I find hope and support during these trying times?

***A thought went up my mind today* by Emily Dickinson**

A thought went up my mind today
That I have had before,
But did not finish,—some way back,
I could not fix the year,
Nor where it went, nor why it came
The second time to me,
Nor definitely what it was,
Have I the art to say.

But somewhere in my soul,
I know I've met the thing before;
It just reminded me—'twas all—
And came my way no more.



A Reflection for Pilgrims:

Take some time to gather wisdom for the continuing journey:

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| What captured my attention? | What surprised me? |
| What moved me? | What changed me? |
| What is my hope for me | and for my faith community? |
| What will I take home? | |