

## Rev'd Jean's Sermon – Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2024

### Passion Sunday

#### Readings:

**Hebrews 5: 5-10**

**John 12: 20-33**

Sir, we want to see Jesus!! Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it bears no fruit”

I would like us to ponder upon these two statements that we hear in our readings today.

It is 33 days since Ash Wednesday, just over a month since we gathered and heard the words “remember you are dust and to dust you shall return”. A very sobering thought also when those words are spoken the sign of the cross is placed upon our forehead, we are marked up for the journey.

As we move now into this Passiontide and step out towards Holy Week and Easter, we thank God for Lent. What have we learned, have we used some of the time to live authentically and not in denial of our amazing humanity and all it challenges and presents us with. The world continues to challenge us with much.

The disciples are anxious and tell Jesus there are Greeks seeking to see him.

There is a real urgency about these Greeks who are wanting to see Jesus. What is going on? Why? Are they checking up on this person who has just raised Lazarus from the dead? What is their inquisitiveness about? Do they know of the feeding of the 5,000? Do they know of the water into wine at a wedding, giving a man his sight, holding a tender conversation with a woman at a well. Or is he just a superstar? And do they want some of it for themselves?

Maybe just to change their way of life. Maybe that's what you and I want. Maybe that is why we came here this morning to see Jesus.

The Gospel doesn't answer all of this concerning these Greeks, it doesn't reveal to us their motives or their desire to see Jesus, in fact we are not told whether or not they did see him.

It does reveal to us in a very powerful way Jesus's response, He tells them unless a tiny seed falls into the ground and dies, it remains a single grain. This is another of Jesus' examples, of the whole creative order another of his wonderful life teaching examples that teach us so much as they did the disciples.

We are fortunate to live in environment where we can see this miracle happen before us in the world of agriculture, you will have seen the tiny wheat seeds have already been planted and the miracle of new life is starting to push through the darkness of the soil it has been planted in.

It has been a difficult winter, very wet and the farmers have to trust that this seed will germinate and produce as they want it too. First it simply goes into the ground tiny as it is and dies.

Not only that, we can take Jesus teaching a step further as we are able to see also the abundance of the wheat as it fills out on the stalks through the summer, growing tall and yielding much, and whatever always happens, the farmer trusts this from the beginning. Then it is harvested for bread for the hungry.

What kind of answer was that from Jesus speaking of seeds and dying, what did this mean to those who were keen to see him. John wants us to hear this message again, what kind of answer is that for us who come week by week? Do we want to see Jesus. What is Jesus saying of his coming fate. This is a very powerful metaphor; it speaks as it has done over time of the transformative power of new life coming to us from the cross.

We then hear Jesus speaking to his disciples in a very moving way he tells them that his heart is troubled, in fact it is very clear he is really disturbed, and maybe very afraid, we hear him praying, he knows that things are likely to be difficult in a very short time, should he ask God to take this away and give him a quiet life, but this Jesus is not quite ordinary although very human, he knows that there will be a time of pain and hurt coming soon. The path of the cross is looming. Without this pain he would not have been able to bring about salvation for the world in a way that we could understand and speak to others about.

He shared with us the pains the joys all the feelings of being human. He knew Loneliness and feelings of pain for others. He shared the feelings of humanity from the inside. I don't know where you stand in this story but let us approach him afresh with those who came to seek him.

The letter to the Hebrews tells of this humanity – telling us at times he was tempted as we are – yet without sin, he understood conflict and forgiveness, as we shall hear in Holy Week.

Today's account from the letter to the Hebrews also describes the intimate relationship that Jesus held precious with his Father, a relationship of trust and obedience.

As I was pondering and writing this up the Hymn "Fighting's within and fears without, Oh Lamb of God, I come" kept playing in my thoughts. says much doesn't it, his humanity, and feelings like ours.

Of course, Jesus rises above his troubled heart, and guides and shows us the way to build relationships that count, the way to peace and fulfilment, that isn't always about getting what we can for ourselves. Jesus points to a loving God in the midst of trials and rough times, pandemics, social and political unrest, war, weather-related disasters and concerns, constant anger and greed, amongst so many people, through these times God asks of us, commitment and trust and a faithful response, praying too like the psalmist suggests with our whole being, then we shall be able to claim "Give us back the joy of your salvation."

Seeing Jesus isn't just being a spectator, it is a way to follow, a life to be lived out in meaningful and contributory ways joining others on the journey too. Sharing the pain of the Cross.

John very much wants us to hear this story of planting and new life from tiny beginnings. What does it mean for us?

What does bearing much fruit hold out for us? What is the tiny grain of wheat in our lives that needs to fall into the earth to be replanted maybe!! Renewal and loss and light will be unveiled to us again through Holy Week and indeed Easter too.

We know well that planting seeds has to have patience, it doesn't grow in ten minutes or even in the next day, it takes time nourishment and care, just as we watch the wheat fields the depths of life produce much fruit, that is the mystery of life that we all share, "unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it remains a single grain. But the opportunity to bear much fruit is both overwhelming and a challenge. Maybe that is where we will see Jesus. In a few moments we will hear and speak and share the words.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. The renewal of life. The single grain has become the bread of life.

It would be pertinent of me to mention the great Saint Patrick whose day it is today, and to recognize with Irish and all Christians Patrick's example of humility and all that he had achieved in bringing inspiration of the message of joy of the gospel was through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the fourth week of our Stewardship Campaign, we have thought about finances, worship and church, we ask ourselves today the question "what is stewardship" summed up on our leaflet. Faith... yes, faith in the one we want to see, want to see in others in our worship and will be seen in our communities. Endorsed by us as we try to follow.

Hope. Hope in the one who calls us out of darkness into light and to lead others there too. In the building of the hope of unity and peace for all. Making a difference to life. Love. Sir we want to see Jesus, a Love that is shown to us by the one we long to see and who helps us to love one another, and to see him in all whom we meet.

The PCC chose Lent to have this time of thinking about stewardship, I hope you are not thinking thank goodness we have finished it. Might I suggest to you that although this is the last part on our leaflet and the last week of a time of re-thinking, might I be allowed to remind you that this is not the end, but very much the new start, the new life, the new beginning of how we might move forward in mission and ministry to plant new seed that will produce fruit that will last.

Please do not discard this leaflet, take it out and read it from time to time, If you have not commented or signed up for anything, please think what little seed you might be able to plant. Thank you to those who have responded by their comments or offerings how together we can make a difference. Sir, we want to see Jesus.