

Sermon for Tuesday of Holy Week, Year C, 2007  
3.iv.07, 7:00 p.m., Holy Eucharist (spoken)  
Isaiah 49:1-7, Psalm 71:1-14, I Corinthians 1:18-31, John 12:20-36

J. J. !

Grace to you and peace from Him Who is and Who  
was and Who is to come! ✠ Amen.

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who  
are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the  
power of God.

– I Corinthians 1:18

They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee,  
and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

-- John 12:21

In today's Epistle, Saint Paul the Apostle summarized  
the challenge and opportunity of proclaiming the Gospel  
in the first Christian century. If someone had *tried* to  
invent a religion guaranteed to be more unpopular in  
the Græco-Roman world, it is hard to imagine how

they could have outdone Christianity. Here was a religion based in Judaism, with all sorts of references to a Scripture almost no one else knew, not even in Greek, teaching one God, not many (but also, as the next centuries would fully elaborate, one God Who is three persons), teaching personal moral responsibility and God Who cannot be bribed or cajoled into answering prayer, a religion also which was centered on a *crucified* rable-rouser and pretender to some heavenly throne whom His own Jewish authorities had disavowed. To top it all off, this new 'Way' as its followers called it, taught that this crucified criminal had performed all sorts of miracles and had Himself risen from the dead. Foolishness to most? Indeed it was! Indeed it still is!

The incident recorded in today's Gospel and passed down to us by the Holy Spirit acting through the Church is truly remarkable. In the midst of that Passover week when the whole Jesus movement appeared to shrewd observers like Judas Iscariot to be falling apart and heading south fast, here are some newcomers who want to see Jesus and, perhaps, to join up with the multitude of His disciples.

John calls them 'Greeks,' by which he probably meant Greek-speaking Jews from Egypt or either side of the Aegean, as opposed to those know-it-all Judæans whom John always identifies as 'Jews.' Of course, they may have been Gentiles. In any case, here they are, wanting most of all to see and be with the Man everyone was talking about, that Nazarene

Who most of Jerusalem was probably betting would be dead by week's end. They asked Philip for an introduction to the leader of a lost cause. *They* wanted to see Him and *they* wanted to be with Him, even though others, like Judas, were formulating their own Plan B.

They wanted to see Jesus because they must have come to believe something about Him. Might that not be this, that here really was the Messiah because this man was not the sort to abandon the lost and the hurting when the going gets tough. Might it not be that they had already seen and heard something in Him that gave them faith the *God* was truly living and that *God had decided to be with us—no matter what?!*

I believe that that *is* so, and I know that such has been the teaching of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church from the beginning. Ours is not a popular message, but it is a priceless message for those who have felt lost in their lives, lost in the world, lost in the universe and lost to God and who now have in Jesus Christ the nearness, the unshakeable commitment to be God-with-us, Immanuel, even in adversity, even in death. The Church lives from this message alone. There is no point in pretending otherwise or in trying to emphasize other motives for joining and remaining part of this people. If we are faithful to the suffering and crucified Christ in this congregation and if we make Him the center of our

life, then others will seek Him out among us and we will experience His rising from the dead together.

✠ Amen.



Now to Him Who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and has made of us a Kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion with the Father and the Holy Spirit, both now and forever. ✠ Amen.

