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## *Sir, We Wish To See Jesus*

**A sermon by the Very Reverend Sam Candler  
Atlanta, Georgia  
The Fifth Sunday of Lent**

"Sir, we wish to see Jesus." It was just before the Feast of the Passover, about this time of year. Some visitors to Jerusalem had heard of this Jesus; and so they had approached Philip, one of the disciples of this person Jesus. "Sir, we would see Jesus."

Those words have become famous words, guiding words. I know of several churches that have those words posted on the inside of pulpits, where only the preacher can see them. "Sir -or Madam""we wish to see Jesus," is the reminder.

I once served a church, up in Connecticut, which was noted for its beautiful stained-glass windows. I was in school in those days, and my internship meant that I taught the children. It's a glorious task to teach Sunday School to children. No adult can properly be called "educated" until you have taught children.

That Connecticut Sunday School class was embarrassingly small. There were only a handful of five-year olds that morning. The church's stained glass windows were so detailed and marvelous, that they provided us with an easy lesson plan. Our lesson plan was simply to walk through that beautiful building and use the windows as teaching devices. The parables and the miracles and the events of Jesus' life were all there. I was showing the children Jesus, and we were having a beautiful time.

Then, suddenly, one five-year old little girl stopped and pointed to the crucifix, a cross with the limp and dying Christ hung over it. "Who is that?" the young girl asked. She did not know.

I said, as gently as I could. "Well, that's Jesus." She was puzzled. "Jesus?" she questioned.

"Yes," I continued. "That's Jesus when he died."

She pondered for a minute. Then she concluded, "No. no, that's not Jesus. Jesus is a little baby. Jesus is a little baby in a manger."

That little girl was right, of course, and I told her so. Yes, Jesus is a little baby in manger. Jesus is especially a little baby in a manger for little girls who are five years old. Little girls with no concept of death yet, see Jesus as a little baby in a manger. And no other image will change that infant image.

"Sir, we wish to Jesus." I believe that is the request that drives humanity no matter how old we are. No matter whether we are Christian or not. Each of us wants to see this savior.

And each of us who claims to be a disciple of Jesus is invited with the same request that came to Philip. Are you one of the disciples of Jesus? Then show us Jesus. We wish to see Jesus.

When I was teaching that little girl, in order to show her Jesus, I had to give up my own image of Jesus, I had to give up my image of Jesus on the cross - and it's certainly a correct image I was giving up, wasn't it? I had to give up my lesson plan in order to allow that child to see Jesus.

There are all sorts of folks trying to show us Jesus, aren't there?

In this politically charged age, some folks would show us Jesus as the great Republican. Their antagonists would show us Jesus as the great Democrat. Some folks claim Jesus is the great American. Some see Jesus as anti-American. Some see Jesus as merely a fine teacher. Some see Jesus as a faith-healer. Some see Jesus as the ultimate psychiatric counselor. Some see Jesus as the ultimate social activist.

Isn't it astounding how often our image of Jesus turns out to look just like us? "We would see Jesus," folks ask us, and we point them to ourselves. That is the sin of racism that our House of Bishops speaks of. We say, "This task, this incident, this issue, my issue, is Jesus."

But I tell you where I see Jesus these days.

I see Jesus every time I see someone point away from themselves. Every time I hear someone say, "Don't look at me. Look over there. Look at her. Look at him," that is when I am seeing Jesus.

When I see someone give up their lesson plan for the sake of a child, I see Jesus. When I see someone give away their place in line. When I see a mother give her food to a child. When I see a man give away his rights for the sake of another.

When I see giving away, then I see Jesus.

For it was Jesus who said, "the one who saves his life will lose it. The one who gives away his life, for my sake, finds it."

Most of us will not die on a cross like Jesus. Not many of us will literally give away our lives. But we can do something just as powerful, in imitation of Jesus.

We can forgive. We can for-give. We can let go.

Forgiveness is the Christian practice of losing one's life daily. Forgiveness is the practice of letting go, daily, the individual claims we make daily on our neighbors. "You owe me that. I deserve this. You did me wrong. You are obligated to me."

Forgiveness releases other people of the claims we have on them. Forgiveness gives away those claims, gives away the bondage of our claims. A habit of forgiveness is the habit of relinquishing our own lesson plan for the sake of the greater image of Jesus.

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Unless a grain of wheat falls in the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

Jesus will give up his life in a few days. Palm Sunday. Good Friday. And from that position of sheer emptiness, he will say, "Father, forgive them." In that giving, in that forgiving, we shall see Jesus in all his glory.

"Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Wherever there is giving, wherever there is forgiving, there is Jesus, our glorified Lord.

AMEN.

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