

**Makeup Free**

Why are you here this morning? Why did you show up in this building at this time on this day? I would guess there are a variety of not-so-noble reasons why you happen to find yourself here right now. Maybe you're parents made you come and so you didn't have a choice. Maybe you felt obligated to be here because your child is getting baptized or you're becoming members of the congregation and it would have been awkward if you were a no-show. Maybe this is just your routine: going to church is simply what you do on a Sunday morning. Maybe you made the effort to be here because you knew I would notice if you weren't and you didn't want to feel guilty about it. But even though there might be a number of not-so-noble reasons why you decided to make an appearance today, I would assume that there are some good and pure reasons as well. In fact, I hope that everyone is here today for at least this reason: we want to see Jesus.

We want to see what Jesus says. We want to see what Jesus does. We want to see what Jesus promises us and commands us and tells us about our lives. We want to see everything that Jesus has in store for us and everything that he wants to reveal to us through the Bible. And Jesus wants us to see him!

He loves it when we come into his house in order to see him. He wants us to see him preaching and teaching, performing miracles and healing diseases. He wants us to see him as a loving, kind, and eternally gracious Savior, ready, willing, and capable of doing everything it will take to secure our eternity. He wants us to see him not just once a week on a Sunday, but every day as we delve into the powerful and effective truths of his Word.

And so a few days before his crucifixion and resurrection, when a few non-Jews, some Greek travelers, came to Philip and said, "We want to see Jesus," Jesus acts a little peculiar. You would think that Jesus would be thrilled to hear that they wanted to see him! "Yeah, bring them on over!" I would imagine Jesus saying. Especially with those who were not of the Jewish nation outside of the land of Israel. What an exciting opportunity to show them who he really was so that they could go back home and take the message of salvation with them! But that's not how Jesus reacted. What Jesus says in response to their request almost seems like he doesn't want these Greeks to see him at all – at least not at that time and not in that way.

**Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.**

Apparently there has been a trend lately of woman celebrities taking selfies without any makeup on. I'm not sure what the big deal is, but these actresses and models and performers do have a certain "look" that they normally display in public – an appearance that highlights the best aspects of their features so that when the tape is rolling or the cameras are clicking or the phones are on, they can look their best. But when they take those pictures of themselves makeup free, that gives their fans a little bit of an insight into what they look like without the mask, without the glitter, without the cover up. It might not be their best look, but it's real.

### **This Is What He Wanted**

Isn't that what Jesus wanted to do in this story? The people from Greece wanted to see Jesus. But Jesus didn't want them to see him the way he was at the moment. He didn't want them to see him preaching to thousands of people and miraculously healing scores of the sick & suffering and being worshiped by hordes of disciples. He wanted these people to see him "makeup free." And when would they be able to see him in that way? Jesus tells us right at the end of the story: **"But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.**

Jesus said these words in Jerusalem on the week of his death. Which means that in just a few short days he would be lifted up onto a cross outside of Jerusalem. And there, as he bled and agonized and died, that is when he would draw all people to himself. There is where these travelers from Greece could see him. There is where Jesus' followers could look on his face. There is where the world would gaze upon the Son of God: on the cross, in the middle of death, makeup free.

And Jesus wanted it that way! He wasn't exactly looking forward to the torture of course, but he wanted people to see him there. **"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour."** To me that's one of the more remarkable character traits that Jesus ever displays: he knew what was going to happen. He understood the sacrifice. He realized the staggering amount of pain he was about to go through – not just physically, but an eternal punishment for all sins in hell's deepest darkest hole. And so of course Jesus's heart was troubled! Of course, Jesus' mind was beating more and more rapidly the closer he got to the horrendous agony that he was about to experience! What human being wouldn't if they knew what was about to occur! But Jesus doesn't pray that this Father would rescue him from it at all. Jesus doesn't try to run away from it in the least. "No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour." This is what Jesus wanted. This is what Jesus needed – not for himself, but for everyone else. He needed us to see him on the cross.

### **Don't Look Away**

He doesn't just want you to know him as a cuddly little baby in a manger. He doesn't just want you to think of him as a bright 12 year old in the temple. He doesn't just want you to remember him as a powerful preacher or a brilliant teacher or an incredible miracle worker or a fervent pray-er or a loving leader – even though he was all of those things and more. He really wants you to see him with bruises all over his face. He wants you to see him with gashes covering his back. He wants you to see him with puncture holes in his head and hands and feet. He wants you to see him cuts and scrapes and gouges all over his body. He wants you to see him

bleed – a lot. He wants you to see him hurt – a lot. He wants you to see him punished – a lot. He wants you to see him at his weakest, at his most vulnerable, at his worst. And he doesn't want you to look away.

Don't look away from his battered face and his tattered body. Don't avert your eyes from this sickening scene. Because he was not just lifted up onto that cross *for* you, but also *because* of you. Your sinfulness is the reason why he had to go through so much misery. My sinfulness was the reason why he had to shoulder so much physical, psychological and spiritual distress. In fact, if it weren't for me, Jesus wouldn't have had to endure nearly as much. That's appalling to me. That makes my stomach turn. The fact that my Lord had to do that for *me*? To feel that for *me*? To suffer that for *me*? I do not dare look away from that now. I better not ever look away from that cross and what happened up there to Jesus as long as I'm alive. I'm responsible for it, after all. I'm to blame.

But we do look away, don't we? We might glance at the cross every so often – when we're in a place like this certainly – but it doesn't really occupy our minds on a continual basis. It's just there in the background: we're used to the symbol, it's a familiar event, yes we believe it but let's move on.... No. We cannot move on. We cannot shift our focus. We cannot do anything but look at Jesus and his cross and his sacrifice and his death. And we must do it without blinking so that we do not miss a thing.

### **The Most Beautiful Sight**

Because even though it might be a gruesome display of the hatred of the Jews and the cruelty of the Romans and the wrath of God the Father over sin, Jesus on the cross is the most beautiful sight you will ever see. Jesus on the cross is where our sins were drowned in his blood. Jesus on the cross is where our crimes were pounded to a couple pieces of wood. Jesus on the cross is where our death died with him. Jesus on the cross is the pinnacle of our salvation because it is the exact place and time when our forgiveness was won. That is why we are here today. That is why we are here every Sunday: to see Jesus executed and to see the gates of heaven opened to all who believe.

We don't know if those Greek travelers ever saw this beautifully horrible scene. We don't know if they made it outside of the city walls on Friday afternoon and looked up at the face of the one who was dying for their eternity. I hope they did. I hope they had a chance to lay eyes on the Savior accomplishing the goal of their salvation. They wanted to see Jesus, after all, and that is exactly how Jesus wanted them to see him even if that's not what they had in mind.

We would like to see Jesus too, don't we? But that usually means that we would like to see Jesus in heaven in all of his glory and power and majesty, surrounded by angels and praised by the nations! And we will see him like that! Jesus rose from the dead of course and is now reigning in heaven with his Father and the Holy Spirit as the Judge and Leader of this world. But before that happens, before we see Jesus like that, we get to see Jesus right here, doing what he does best: taking our place and shielding us from the sentence that we deserve. Jesus doesn't get better than this! This is where he is his most loving, his most caring, his most compassionate, his most merciful, his most human, his most divine. This is *how* we need to see Jesus, this is *where* we need to see Jesus and this is *why* we need to see Jesus. So soak it up, take it in, do not ever let it slip from your mind because there is nothing else you ever need to see than Jesus on the cross.

Amen.