

Title: **“WE WOULD SEE JESUS.”**

Text: John 12:21

Subject: *Faith in Christ*

Date: Sunday Evening — April 18, 2010

Tape: John #82

Readings: *Bob Poncer and Larry Criss*

Introduction:

I have preached in a lot of places and look across a lot of pulpits into the faces of eternity bound men and women. Believe me, the pulpit looks a good bit different from this side. Sitting where you are, it looks glamorous, powerful, inviting and charming. It may even look like easy work to stand before men and women and preach the gospel. But from back here, that pulpit is huge, august, sobering and uninviting. From this place, I have to speak for God to men and women, whose immortal souls are upon the brink of eternity. Here you are with great needs, heavy burdens, hungry souls and thirsty hearts. And it is my responsibility under God to feed your needy souls with knowledge and understanding. Believe me, there is no glamour here, only an awesome weight of responsibility.

AT ROSEMONT

One of the very first times I stood behind a pulpit, there was something before my eyes which made the burden far greater than I had realized before. I was preaching for Bro.

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Herbert Wilson at Rosemont Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. I was just a boy, nineteen years old. But I saw something I have never forgotten. I try to remember it and picture it every time I prepare to preach. Right across the top of the pulpit, there was a short strip of green tape, with these words punched out in it: “*Sir, we would see Jesus.*” That is my subject: — **“WE WOULD SEE JESUS.”**

Those words were spoken by certain Greeks who had come up to Jerusalem to worship at the Feast of the Passover. They came to Philip, one of the Lord’s disciples, and said, “*Sir, we would see Jesus.*” I hope that is why you are here. I hope you have come here desiring to see the Lord Jesus Christ. I hope that in the singing and reading and praying that we have already done that you have been looking for Christ, and have seen him. And I hope that in your inmost being you are silently praying for me now and longing after Christ. **If you have come here to see Christ, see him you shall, for he has promised,** “*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*” The Lord God declares, — “*And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart*” (Jeremiah 29:13).

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I have no purpose in preaching this message but to show you the Lord Jesus Christ as he has revealed himself in this Blessed Book.

Proposition: If you would see the Lord Jesus, you shall see him, because he is willing to be seen.

We are not told who these Greeks were, what prompted them to seek the Lord, or what became of them after the Lord Jesus made himself known to them. We are only told that they wanted to see the Lord Jesus, and that they did see him. They saw him as very few upon the earth ever saw him. And there are many things for us to learn from their story.

MANY REASONS

First, I want to remind you that people want to see Jesus for many reasons. Some, like those Jews spoken of in verse 9, want to see him because of **religious curiosity**. — *“Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead”* (v. 9). **Herod** desired more than once to see him (Luke 9:9; 23:8). He was impressed by the Lord’s fame, his miracles and his disciples. But his curiosity came to nothing.

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How many Herods there are! You are curious but not concerned, interested but not intense. You talk about Jesus, read about Jesus and hear about Jesus, but you do not need Jesus Christ, the Lord. **Yet, if you are even just curious, I have some hope for you.** The Lord may come to you today in sovereign mercy, as he did to curious Zacchaeus (Luke 19:3-5).

“And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.” (Luke 19:3-5)

Some want to see the Lord because they **hope to gain some earthly advantage by him.** There were those who had eaten the loaves and fishes. And they thought that if they followed Christ, the loaves and fishes would always be abundant (John 6:26). If you seek Christ because you want him to heal your body, heal your finances, or heal your home, you will never see him. If you seek him because you need him to heal your soul, that is another thing. You just might get to see him. In fact, I am certain of it. Our Savior always heals all who have need of healing (Luke 9:11).

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NEEDY SOULS

Then there are some who want to see Christ because **they must see him**. They cannot go on without him. They know their need of him. And they want him more than life itself.

- They Woman with the Issue of Blood.
- The Syrophenician Woman.
- The Woman in Simon’s House.
- These Greeks.

If you have come here with a desperate, needy heart, desiring to see, that is to know and have the Son of God, take courage. — **The Lord Jesus Christ is willing to be seen**. Our dear Savior was the most accessible of all men. Talk of kind, winning, accessible, approachable men! Was there ever one like our Redeemer? He made everyone feel comfortable in his presence: Publicans and harlots, the sick and the sinner, men and women, the dying thief and the little child. The only people he ever hid from were self-righteous Pharisees.

Sinner, do not stay away for fear of being rejected, scorned, or treated harshly. Come near. Listen. Learn of Christ. Look to him and be saved.

Did ever sinner find this Friend reject him?

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No, not one! No, not one!

The far off Gentile, looking to Christ, is brought nigh. The lost Greek, looking to Christ, is a son of Abraham.

DIVINE MEANS

If you would see the Lord Jesus Christ, he must be revealed to you and in you by the grace and power of God himself (Matthew 16:16-17; Galatians 1:15-16).

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 16:16-17)

Search for him and look for him **in the Word** and in the preaching of the gospel (John 5:39). You have done the right thing in coming to this place, with sinners like yourself, who have tasted and found that the Lord is gracious, who have looked to him and found salvation. It is here, in his house, by the preaching of his Word that the Lord God reveals Christ to chosen sinners. Oh, may he reveal him to you this hour! Like these Greeks, you have come to the place of worship. But still he must be revealed in you. Pray that, as I preach, God the Holy Spirit will

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reveal Christ in your heart. Cry to God himself, and say, “*Lord, we would see Jesus.*”

SALVATION OBTAINED

Salvation is seeing Christ. God’s grace, God’s salvation, God’s atonement, God’s forgiveness, God’s righteousness is obtained by looking to Christ (Isaiah 45:22). If you would see Jesus, look to him, as he commands you!

“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else.” (Isaiah 45:22)

You know and I know that men and women left to themselves look everywhere for salvation but to Christ.

I am not being bigoted, prejudiced, or radical when I say that. You know that it is true.

- Millions around the world look to **idols of wood, stone, brass, silver and gold.** I have seen these idols with my own eyes. And I have watched men and women bow before them by the thousands.
- Thousands look to **idols taken from the Holy Scriptures!** They are slaves to ceremonies, rituals, holy days and sabbath days. They make gods of the apostles, good luck charms of crosses, angels and gestures, and sacraments of the ordinances of God.

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They worship and serve the creature more than the Creator!

- Multitudes look to **the law, morality, and good works.** — The Rich Young Ruler- *“All these things have I kept!”* — The Pharisees- *“God I thank thee that I am not as...”*

(Romans 10:1-4) “Brethren, my prayer and heart’s desire for Israel is that they might be saved- For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God, for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.

- Most everybody looks to **his own religious experience, decision and feelings.** They have a commitment of a sort. They have a refuge. But it is a refuge of lies (Isaiah 28:15).
- Many, many, who imagine that they are wiser, smarter and more capable than others look to **philosophy, their own thoughts and opinions.** Their doctrine is, “It seems to me!” But God says, *“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways.”*

The Word of God clearly declares that *“Salvation is of the LORD!”* — *“It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.”* — *“The wages of sin is death, but the*

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gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord!”
— *“The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord!”*

God speaks plainly and so must his servants. — *“They have no knowledge”* that set up gods of their own imaginations, *“that pray to a god who cannot save!”* God says, *“There is no God beside me, a just God and a Savior, there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else!”*

Salvation is God’s work and this salvation is in his Son Jesus Christ. God has determined to save some of Adam’s fallen race, but only through the Person and work of his beloved Son!

(John 3:16) “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

(Galatians 4:4-5) “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

(1 Timothy 1:15) “This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

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(2 Corinthians 5:17-21) “Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

If you would know God, if you would be saved, you must look to Christ.

I really do not know anything to say to my generation other than what Christ and the Apostles said in their day. — “*I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive*” (John 5:43). — “*Search the scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me that ye might have life*” (John 5:39-40).

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Yet, for the glory of God and the good of those who have ears to hear and eyes to see, I keep telling sinners everywhere, telling anyone whose ear I can get what the Lord God our Savior says, — *“Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else.”* — Salvation is obtained by looking to Christ. — *“There’s life for a look at the crucified One!”*-

SALVATION SUSTAINED

“We would see Jesus” because salvation is obtained in the blessed experience of grace by seeing him. And *“we would see Jesus,”* secondly, because salvation is sustained in our souls by seeing him. Salvation begins by looking to Christ; and salvation is sustained by looking to Christ (Hebrews 12:1-2).

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset [us], and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of [our] faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”
(Hebrews 12:1-2)

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The words “looking unto” imply much more than a casual glance, or even a careful look at an object. The words imply both a deliberate turning of the eyes away from one object to another and a constant stare upon the object unto which we look. If we would run with patience the race that is set before us, and finish it, we must be incessantly *“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”*

“We must not give a look, or squint at anything that may hinder this fair and lovely sight of Jesus” (Isaac Ambrose).

The Lord commanded Lot, “Look not behind thee” (Genesis 19:17), as he was fleeing from Sodom. So we must not look with yearning eyes upon this perishing world if we would flee from it. When God saves his elect, he causes the saved sinner to look to Christ. — *“At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel. And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made”* (Isaiah 17:7-8).

The eye of faith is set on things above (Colossians 3:2). — *“We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen”* (2 Corinthians 4:18). **Looking**

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to an eternal God, an eternal Christ, an eternal Spirit, an eternal crown and an eternal glory dims the luster of the world’s most alluring temporal things. What are these visible things in comparison with the invisible things to which we look?

That One to whom we look is here called — **“JESUS.”** **This name was twice given to the incarnate God, our Savior.** It was first given to him when he came into the world to do the will of his Father, when he came to fulfil his suretyship engagements for us, when he came to save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). Then, when he had finished his work, when he had with his own blood obtained eternal redemption for us, this name was given to him forever (Philippians 2:10).

“JESUS” is both the name of our Redeemer’s humiliation and the name of his exaltation. This name was first bestowed upon the Son of God as he came to obey the law of God as our Representative and to die for the satisfaction of the law’s justice as our Substitute. It was the name of his humiliation as Jehovah’s righteous Servant.

Yet, this is the name of our Savior’s exaltation and glory, too. — *“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven,*

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and things in earth, and things under the earth.” **The name given to Immanuel in his transcendent glory is “JESUS.”** The name signifies Savior. He is called Jesus because *“he shall save his people from their sins!”* He does not try to save. He saves. He does not offer salvation. He saves. *“Looking unto Jesus”* we have been saved, are being saved and shall be saved. Look to Jesus, the Christ, and you shall be saved.

Salvation is not found in working for Jesus, or in longing for Jesus, or even in praying to Jesus. Salvation is obtained by “looking unto Jesus.” You will never be saved by looking to yourself, or looking to the church, or looking to a preacher or soul-winner. You will never be saved by walking a church aisle, saying a little prayer, or by being baptized. Salvation is obtained by faith alone, by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, by looking unto Jesus.

We rejoice and give thanks for God the Father, in his sovereign mercy, glorious predestination and electing love. But salvation is not obtained by looking to the Father’s election, predestination and sovereignty. **We are most grateful for the Holy Spirit’s effectual call, irresistible grace and unbreakable seal.** But salvation is not obtained by looking to the Spirit. **Salvation is not even obtained by looking to God the Son in his absolute divinity. Salvation is obtained by “looking unto Jesus,”**

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by looking to God the Son incarnate, our divine Surety, the only Mediator between God and men, the sinners’ Substitute.

Blessed name this is for our Savior — “JESUS!” It is to him that we must look. Looking to him, only to him, we are saved. His name is *JESUS* because he is Jehovah who saves. He came into the world, God in human flesh, on an errand of mercy, to save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).

The JESUS to whom we must look for salvation is that JESUS who is himself God over all, blessed forever (Romans 9:5). The *JESUS* to whom we must look for salvation is that one who had a people to save before he ever came into the world to save them. That *JESUS* who is the Christ, the Savior of sinners, is the eternal Surety of his covenant people. He was, from everlasting, trusted by God the Father (Ephesians 1:12; 2 Timothy 1:9; Job 33:24; Revelation 13:8), as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, to save his chosen people from their sins. The Father gave his people into the hands of his Son as our Good Shepherd and covenant Mediator (John 6:39). Because he pledged himself to do it, he therefore must save his people from their sins (John 10:16).

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That JESUS to whom we look for salvation did not come into this world to save everybody. But he did come to save somebody. And those whom he came to save he shall save by three, almighty, irresistible, infallible works of grace. He has saved all his elect **BY REDEMPTION.** The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has effectually redeemed and obtained eternal salvation for every sinner for whom his precious blood was shed at Calvary (Galatians 3:13; Hebrews 9:12). He is saving his people, one by one, **BY REGENERATION** (John 5:21, 25). At the appointed time of love and grace, he sends forth his Spirit to chosen, redeemed sinners, raising them from death to life by the omnipotent power of his grace. And he shall save his people from their sins **BY RESURRECTION** glory (John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:6). In resurrection glory, every chosen, redeemed, called sinner shall be brought into the full, perfect blessedness of salvation in Christ and with Christ for the glory of Christ forever!

“We would see Jesus!” — **“Looking unto Jesus!”** — **In those simple, sweet words, we are given the whole secret of life.** May God the Holy Spirit give us grace to heed them that we may ever be found *“looking unto Jesus.”*

Seeing Jesus in the Scriptures we discover who he is, what he has done, why he did it, and where he is now. The

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Book of God speaks of him. Its purpose is to reveal him. Happy is that sinner who finds the Treasure that is buried in the Field of Inspiration.

Seeing Jesus incarnate we behold God come to save, our Representative, Substitute, Federal Head, Mediator and covenant Surety, by whose obedience chosen sinners are made the righteousness of God.

Seeing Jesus crucified, we see justice satisfied. Here we learn how that God can be both just and the Justifier of sinners. In Jesus' sin-atonement blood we find ransom, pardon, and peace. In the crucified Christ we meet the just God who is our Savior.

Seeing Jesus risen again, we see the receipt written out in capital letters — “PAID IN FULL!” The risen Christ is God's public declaration that he is fully satisfied with the sacrifice of his darling Son as payment for our sins, payment for our ransom. The risen Christ allows us, unworthy as we are in ourselves, to approach the holy Lord God with full assurance of acceptance in him, because he has made us worthy of acceptance.

Seeing Jesus glorified, we find in him our great High Priest and all-prevailing Advocate in heaven. There he ever appears in the presence of God, making intercession for us,

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according to the will of God. The meritorious efficacy of his blood, his righteousness and his person assure us that none shall perish, or even be charged with a single sin for whom this great Savior intercedes.

Salvation is “looking unto Jesus” and not to our faith. It is not our faith that saves us, but Christ. We are not saved by looking unto our look; it is by looking unto Jesus.

Salvation is “looking unto Jesus” and not to our strength nor to our weakness. We are not to look to our gifts or lack of them. We are not to look to our good works, or lack of them. We are not to look to our devotion, or lack of it. We are not to look to our faithfulness, or lack of it. Christ is our only hope, our only Savior, and our only assurance.

It is seeing Jesus alone, it is “looking unto Jesus” alone that is salvation. Look to Jesus always and for everything. In all circumstances, in all conditions, in all experiences, good and bad, look unto Jesus alone! Let us be found “looking unto Jesus” until he comes again to call us home in death or in the resurrection at the last day, and “*we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is.*”

THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER

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Salvation is “looking unto Jesus.” It is looking to Christ alone as the Author of our faith. He is the One who, in covenant mercy, devised and designed the whole scheme of grace. He is the One who gave us faith by the regenerating grace and power of his Holy Spirit. And he is the One who is the solitary object of our faith.

We look to Christ as the Finisher of our faith, as well. By his active and passive obedience unto the Father as our Representative and Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ finished the transgressions of his people, made an end of sin and brought in everlasting righteousness. Thus he finished our salvation.

SALVATION FINISHED

Christ Jesus is the end of our faith, too. That is to say, at the end of faith, when we have finished our race, Christ himself is the Reward we shall have. And the Lord Jesus Christ is the One who shall bring our faith to its proper finish and conclusion. He will finish his good work of grace which he began in us.

Salvation begins by “*looking unto Jesus.*” This is our Savior’s word to sinners everywhere — “*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else*” (Isaiah 45:22). There is no God but

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that God who reveals himself in the Lord Jesus Christ, “*a just God and a Savior.*” There is no salvation apart from the knowledge of him (John 17:3). If you would be saved, you must look to the Lord Jesus Christ, you must trust him, who has, by the sacrifice of himself, put away sin. You must trust him whose blood has satisfied the infinite justice of the holy Lord God, him through whom God can be both just and the Justifier of all who believe.

As salvation begins, it is sustained, maintained and continues by “*looking unto Jesus.*” — “*Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*” When we are tempted to quit, we must ever “*consider him.*” **Christ is the Rule by which we must live, the Example we must follow, and the Inspiration for persevering faith and faithfulness.**

Then, when we have finished our course, when we have crossed the finish line, our salvation shall end with us forever seeing Jesus, “*looking unto Jesus!*” It is written, — “*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*” (1 John 3:2). When our salvation is finished, we shall see

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his face forever! We shall be found forever “*looking unto Jesus,*” with perfect joy and complete satisfaction, in everlasting bliss!

Do you see the Lord Jesus Christ? If you do, I can tell you what is going on in your soul right now, and what will go on in the days ahead. Seeing Jesus causes the soul that looks on him to mourn for him (Zechariah 12:10). Looking to him, we find strength to persevere (Hebrews 12:1-2).

“We would see Jesus” is the daily cry of the believing heart. If we have seen little, we want to see much. If we have seen much, we want to see more. And it is the responsibility of every gospel preacher, every time he preaches, to show needy sinners the Lord Jesus Christ.

I love to tell the story,
For those who know it best
Seem hungering and thirsting
To hear it like the rest.

Why do we desire to see him? What does the vision of Christ do for us? Seeing him gives us...

- rest
- Peace
- assurance.
- light.
- freedom.
- strength.
- joy.

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- fullness.
- hope.

“*Looking unto Jesus*” quickens our spirits and heals our souls.

Yet, I must remind you that Philip and Andrew could not show Jesus to these Greeks. They could point him out and talk about him. But only the Lord Jesus Christ can make himself known. Ever pray for me as I seek a Word from God for your souls, that the Lord God might cause his Word to be effectual to you and to others who hear it, effectually causing chosen, redeemed sinners to see our Savior, Jesus!

Amen.