

St Pius & St Anthony 5th Sunday Lent Year B2

Maybe, you've had at least one of these type experiences, where your eye catches something. It jumps out at you, and you can't see anything else, and you can't unsee it. When I was in high school, once in our front yard, there was a nice little big tree and a plastic grocery bag had blown into its branches, stuck just enough to not ever be able to be blow out, and even considering a whole panorama view of the neighborhood, all I could see was that white bag stuck in that limb on our tree. It wasn't coming down, until someone went up to get it. I got home after school about 3:30 and had about an hour before I would report to a local job I had, delivering goods for a pharmacy. With this tree in our yard, climbing it was doable without equipment (ladders, etc). So, one day I was going to tackle getting that 'eyesore' bag out of it! It wasn't the best kind of tree to climb, not like those pine trees that have branches growing out like natural peg steps, that grow new pegs every 2-3 foot up it. But it did have a couple low-enough branches that could get you started. You had to jump up and grab, then throw a leg out and catch another branch like a gymnast on missed bars, and then begin the monkey climb out on limbs to get to that bag. But I got it! Mission accomplished easy enough, and then on my way down, as I got to that last branch, I had to jump down to ground, and as I hit the ground in a squat, I saw at the base of tree a gold ring! Wow! What a find! Treasure found, without even hunting! Internally, I was asking 'Like how did you get here'...(Did a squirrel place you there, were you in that bag??) I reached to pick it up, THEN it hit me, I saw green & white letters 'OC', that was my own school class ring! Must have slid off in my gymnastic twists up the branches. Was that whole adventure meant to make me appreciate the ring more, or teach me to be more careful about climbing tree!

Before jumping right into today's gospel, I just want to point out that earlier in the scripture, Jesus had taught us (Matthew 7:7) "Seek and you will find". He says it – it will happen. And then today, we hear a great line in the gospel, from a group of Greeks (and what that means is that in Jerusalem at Passover, Greeks would have been perceived as 'outsiders') yet they are curious and that offer a great statement: "We would like to see Jesus" (Jn 12:21) They are looking for Him! It sounds like blind Bartimaeus when he says, "Master, I want to see" (Mark 10:51) or Zacchaeus (the inspiration of my tree story) who takes his words to the next level by acting on his intention and climbing a tree to SEE Jesus, (Luke 19:3) So, 'Seek and you will find', and these Greeks do that! (I like to point out that we don't always find on the first try. Notice that the Greeks don't immediately get

introduced to Jesus. It takes a couple of referrals to get to Him (it is not a direct connection - What do they say, but that God writes straight with crooked lines!) , They end up getting introduced to Jesus, by 1st going to Philip (*probably sought out due to name 'Philip' being most obvious Greek-like name- not like obvious hebrew names as Thomas or Shimon or Bartholomew*), and then Philip turns to Andrew and then they both make the leading approach to Jesus. It wasn't direct, so they had to be patient, and wait, going through a couple steps first: is that like when we visit a doctor and go through this----hearing, "Okay, doctor is ready to see you, but 1st you need blood drawn, and a scan done" then see her...."?

With the Greeks asking about an appearance - meet up with Jesus, they get it and not just them, but all of us. And does He ever show? Their seeking Him out, provokes a dramatic display scene of Jesus' identity as God's Son to the whole world – we can thank them for bringing it all out. For example, when they go to him, it happens, Jesus recognizes that now as even outsiders are coming to Jerusalem to find him out, that tells Jesus that His end is near (His 'hour' is come) So, Jesus calls upon Father in Prayer ('Glorify your name -Jesus is the personal name of God) , and the Father's voice thunders back a recognition('I have glorified it and will again'). I suggest this public overhearing of Jesus and Father talking (and it heard as 'some said like thunder' and others as an 'angel voice' some said it sounds like thunder, some like Angel Voice (Jn 12:29), This John's version of the Transfiguration Event. John's gospel doesn't ever record that Peter/James/John moment together going up mountainside, so this Voice from Heaven with 'Glory' talk is John's Transfiguration/Glorification of Jesus. (*remember that in synoptic gospels at the transfiguration and baptism, we hear the Father's voice declare, 'This is my beloved Son – Listen to Him!*) And what does the Father say here in John, but "I have glorified it and will again' The Father is referring to the recent (John chapter 11) glorification when –Father did glorify Jesus by the raising of Lazarus from dead (Father reference Jn 11:41-42) just happened in John 11), and it will happen again in John 20 when Jesus is raised from the dead Himself.

And Jesus' resurrection helps explain the otherwise confusing grain of wheat dying and rising (Jn 12:24), along with his reference to 'being lifted up and drawing all things to self' (Jn 12:32) Jesus' resurrection is **Ultimate Glory**. Jesus is teaching us how to follow him all the way, and what comes next (post-death) if we stay with Him. Jesus shares what I call, similar to His 'mustard seed **law of growth**', he shares here His 'wheat grain **law of resurrection**' – to live forever, one first dies to open the Way. Jesus says 'Unless grain of wheat falls to ground, it remains only a single grain, But if it drops, humbles itself, (buried in obscurity)

then it multiplies abundantly (become overflowing seed in the new grain head-raised up!) I love how Jesus parallels himself to the grain of wheat. He will say when I am 'lifted up-even though His lifting up is death-lifted up on the cross is Jesus, 'laying down one's life for us' (Good shepherd talk Jn 10:11,15) His ***laying down is what draws up all to himself***, Him drawing up all people to himself – that's the new head wheat drawing all life upward into this seedhead-bloom of (it is theoretical, but I guess you could take just one seed from this head each future year and spread the seed head over generations and generations-for example, I know that I plant cotton every year, and I do use last fall's boll head seed, but I have kept a starter pack of seed given to me about 7 years ago -still good).

So, this grain of wheat teaching and His 'lifting up' is Jesus suggesting prophetically His 'soon to come' Resurrection and the eternal life shared/given to us who believe and follow after Him. Like Jesus telling those good Greeks who search him out, Jesus is letting us know that He is to be found too, resurrected and raised to new life, in our imitation of Him, and the laying down of our lives in service of Him (to His glory) -Here Jesus is introducing true discipleship of Him, following Him to the end. Yet, what do we answer? That is what John 12:31 is about: Jesus saying, "Now is the time of judgment on this world...." What are you going to do? Each of us decides? Moment of Witness. Judgement time. Am I with Him? This question will only grow stronger by its demands on us - as we enter holy Week-Palm Sunday next Sunday, we will feel many times, do I go this far with Him, do I stay with Him through sacrifice and death even, or do I walk away and leave Him? Will I keep close to Jesus all the way to the cross, trusting in the resurrection? This can be our own prayer for the next couple weeks leading to Easter? Will we stay by Christ's side until the end, (considering Easter, until our new beginning?)