

## “ALL, No Exceptions”

People wanted to see Jesus. They had heard about him and now they wanted to see him. Don't we all? Isn't that why we worship? The hunger and thirst for God is something we are born with and something that is stirred up within us as we go through life.

We want to see Jesus. If only we could see him with our own eyes.

Well, maybe we haven't seen him yet with our eyes, but there are other ways to see him. As we often hear, it is not just that SEEING IS BELIEVING, but BELIEVING IS SEEING.

In other words we live into the faith. As we live it, we start to see what we didn't see before.

As Jesus talked about what he was about to do, he compared it to a grain of wheat. Just as a grain of wheat is placed into the ground, it grows into a plant that is harvested.

When you first look at that grain or seed, you don't see what it will become. You can't tell by looking at it, it will take time to see it as it comes up out of the ground.

Growing up on a farm, I can't say that I thought about that very much, but through weeks and months with the sunshine and the rain, the seeds planted in the ground suddenly became something new.

The seeds began to bear fruit just as Jesus said.

For many of us growing up in faith and in the church, we didn't see at the time where that would take us, but here we are today, still growing in faith, still worshiping God, still serving as we share God's love with the world.

Looking back at the seed that was planted in us, we didn't see the future yet. And of course, we could say we still don't.

The future is in God's hands. Back in our Gospel lesson, Jesus had to explain what that future was going to be like for him.

He was headed to the cross. He would die, but then, like a seed dying in the ground and coming back to life again, so would he.

And then he says these powerful words, "When I am lifted up, I will draw ALL PEOPLE to myself. ALL PEOPLE.

Jesus would become the way for God to reach out and draw all people to God.

For Jesus, the countdown has come, the hour has come and there is no turning back. The cross is coming for him.

For us who read this passage, we will either turn back or we will follow Jesus which takes us where we might not want to go, right through holy week, the week after next.

The presence of Greeks in this passage is a reminder that as Jesus says at the end of this lesson from John, through his death on the cross, he will draw all people to himself, not just the Jews around him but all people.

In this lesson, Jesus shows that though the hour has come, he's not sure he's ready. The Good News is that out of death comes life.

He invites his followers, including us to take up our crosses and follow him. In Hebrews chapter 8, we find the promise of God repeated from our Jeremiah lesson today. It's great news. Here it is:

"The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not

like the covenant that I made with their ancestors, on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant, and so I had no concern for them says the Lord. This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

And they shall not teach one another or say to each other, "Know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."

That is one of the greatest promises in the bible. It is promised in Jeremiah and going on into the New Testament. What a promise. God is able to not only forgive, but to forget.

We forget somethings we don't like to forget like where are my car keys or where did I put my cell phone, but other things, like mistakes we have made, we sometimes can't forget, even though we want to.

But we worship a God who forgives but also forgets.

The late, Alvin Rogness has told the story of a woman who came to confess something to her pastor. When she left, she asked if she should tell the person she had offended.

The pastor said, why do that? God has already forgotten it.

We don't have to cling to sins or mistakes we have made. I can imagine that God gets tired of hearing about them. Jesus left us with that great promise when he said, when I am lifted up, I will draw ALL people to myself. ALL WITH NO EXCEPTIONS.

In that statement, we find the good news of the gospel