

## I Wish to See Jesus

The Rev. Sarah Dunn  
St. David's Episcopal Church, Wayne, PA  
The Fifth Sunday in Lent

Rev. Sarah Dunn: Sir, we wish to see Jesus. May I speak to the name of the one, the holy and yes, the living God? Amen.

Congregation: Amen.

Rev. Sarah Dunn: Please be seated. So the season of Lent is a time of confession, so I have a confession to make y'all. I confess [00:00:30] that I've been really struggling lately to see Jesus at work. I don't know about you, but sometimes that cycles through my life of I struggled to see God incarnate before me. I've especially been struggling on those days where I turn on the news or start doom scrolling through social media. Anyone else struggle with that a little bit? Yeah, okay. Thank you.

And I see [00:01:00] all the war and strife and violence that's going on across our globe. I struggle to see Jesus in what happened on October 7th with the terrorist attacks by Hamas. I struggle to see Jesus in the 30,000 Palestinians who have been killed and mothers holding their starving children. I struggle to see Jesus in the fact that 14,000 Sudanese people have been killed this past year, and we hardly ever talk about it. I struggle [00:01:30] to see Jesus in the fact that this Russian Ukrainian war is now on its third year and over 500,000 people have been killed.

Y'all, I struggle to see Jesus in that. I struggle to see Jesus in what's going on in our government and on the national level. I struggle to see Jesus in a government that doesn't seem to be working for the majority of Americans. I struggle to see Jesus in the intense political division [00:02:00] that is between us, our larger community, our church community, and even our family members. I struggle to see Jesus in the level of hate and vitriol that is present in the US. I struggle to see Jesus in my own personal life, even. I moved here seven months ago and I thought, "Man, I handled that six-day car journey, cross-country move with one dog and three teenagers, [00:02:30] and I survived," and that was the end of the transition. But no, it has not been, my friends.

I struggle to see Jesus in the setbacks and the difficulties and the dreams not coming to fruition that my family is currently going through. I selfishly struggle to see Jesus at work in my daily life. And I reckon to guess that [00:03:00] some of you have also struggled with that too because we are limited human beings. We, yes, we believe and we follow Jesus, but sometimes it's hard to see Jesus showing up, isn't it?

Sometimes I feel like those Greeks in today's gospel reading from John, it states that some Greeks went to Philip and said, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." But I wonder friends, why did they not see Jesus [00:03:30] in the first place? Was he that hard, that difficult to pick out of the crowd? But really, he probably was. Because if we think about who Jesus was, he wouldn't have been wearing fancy clothes. He wouldn't probably have had an educated accent. Instead, he would've just looked like a common Hebrew person. Jesus [00:04:00] was a man like many other men then. He was a Brown, middle Eastern man. He was a blue collar worker who learned the trade of carpentry from his adopter father Joseph and had calluses caked on his hands.

Jesus was a poor man who came from Nazareth in Galilee. Nazareth being a small rural town that probably only had 300 inhabitants at that [00:04:30] time. Jesus was an oppressed individual under the hand of a foreign regime, under the thumb of an oppressive power that was the Empire of Rome. Jesus didn't seem like anything special at first. And so perhaps the Greeks, their question of "We wish to see Jesus," maybe it's not the fact that they couldn't [00:05:00] get around the crowds. Maybe it's not the fact that Jesus was enveloped by his disciples, but maybe they couldn't even see Jesus because they couldn't recognize the God in human flesh that was right before their very eyes. Because our God showed up in a very surprising manner, in the form of a poor man with mud caked to his feet, [00:05:30] 2000 years ago.

And I imagine if this is the God we follow, if this is the Jesus that we profess every Sunday that yeah, if he showed up in 2024, it might be difficult to recognize him because He doesn't look like any of us. He might not even speak like any of us. He actually didn't even have the same religious tradition as any of us. [00:06:00] Jesus was far different than what we would recognize perhaps as the God in our midst in 2024. And so how do we come to understand this Jesus? How do we recognize Him? How do we see Him when He seems so foreign from where we are now?

Well, to start, if there are any teenage troublemakers [00:06:30] and rebel rousers in our mitzvah, y'all are pretty close to Jesus. Why are you giving me eyes right now? You're not in trouble. Because Jesus was a troublemaker and a rebel rouser. He was someone who took part in acts of civil disobedience. He cured people on the Sabbath, which was against Jewish law at the time. He overturned tables in the temple as we heard in our gospel reading just a couple Sundays ago. He even marched [00:07:00] into Jerusalem on the back of a humble donkey with the Jewish people growing around him, the movement expanding, the noise arising as on the other side of the city, Pilate enters on a war steed and is wondering where the people are to praise his entrance. Jesus is a little more radical maybe than we in 2024 like to give him credit for.

[00:07:30] So how do we in this time and space, geography removed, 2000 years removed, culture and time and space removed, how do we come to see and recognize and know Jesus in our midst?

Well, the good news is that Jesus likes to give us a few hints along the way. Some of you may have remembered the Sunday before Advent, Christ, the King Sunday, we read the gospel from Matthew Chapter 25, [00:08:00] where Jesus reminds the disciples, "When you fed the hungry, you fed me. When you clothed the naked, you clothed me. When you visited the imprisoned, you visited me." Jesus reminds us that by the divine taking on human flesh, the human flesh grows closer to the divinity. He reminds us that the image and likeness of God is within every human being and we should treat every [00:08:30] child of God that we encounter on this planet as Jesus. That maybe we don't see Jesus physically as the Brown Middle Eastern man of 2000 years ago, but we see Jesus in every one of these faces in this sanctuary. We see Jesus in every friend that we encounter along way. We see Jesus in our neighbors, in our community members, [00:09:00] and we even see Jesus in the stranger in our midst.

Since it's St. Patrick's Day, I got to bring some St. Patrick into this equation, but I want to debunk a myth that St. Patrick wasn't actually Irish, y'all. Did we know that? I think this might be new news maybe. No, St. Patrick was actually a Briton. He was actually from the western coast of England, a Christian, and [00:09:30] he was captured by Irish pirates and enslaved in Ireland for seven years as a youth and young adult, and he eventually escaped and went home to Britain. But eventually, as God likes to do, God knocked him up over the head and reminded him, "Hey Patrick, you have a call in this world, a call to evangelize to the Irish people," And he sailed back to Ireland and saw Christ [00:10:00] in every child of God that he encountered.

As St. Patrick's Breastplate, a hymn we sung two weeks ago, reminds us Christ in mouth of both friend and stranger. Patrick saw Jesus even in his oppressors. So friends, Jesus is already here. Even if we forget it, even if we struggle to [00:10:30] see Him, even if we doubt for a split second, y'all, Jesus is here. And you all have been Jesus to me, when I've been struggling, when I've been down, when I am doubtful and lacking faith. You all have been Jesus to me. The women of our Fall Fellowship Weekend who loved me and hiked up to some falls with me and gave me a trailblazer [00:11:00] merit badge, y'all are Jesus to me. My clergy colleague who every Sunday when she sees just how frazzled I look, asks me time and time again, week in and week out, "How can I help?" That person is Jesus to me.

The individual who after our Creation Care dreaming meeting last Sunday, saw my [00:11:30] two hungry teenagers sitting on the floor in my office and offered them potluck leftover abundance, y'all, that person was Jesus to me. My friends, Jesus is here. Jesus is all around us. Jesus in mouth of both friend and stranger and there's some good news in that. There's some good news that Jesus keeps showing up day [00:12:00] in and day out, year in and year out. No matter how far we are removed in time and space from 2000 years ago, Jesus is here. And our challenge as Christians during this Lenten season is to ask ourselves, "Where have we fallen short in seeing Jesus in our midst? Where have we struggled

[00:12:30] to name Christ's presence, especially in people who are different than us? How have we been challenged by seeing the image and likeness of God in another human being?"

Perhaps it is the willingness to see Christ in someone who votes differently than you. Someone who has a different political affiliation than you, whether they're Republican, Democrat, Libertarian, or Socialist, or somewhere [00:13:00] in between. Perhaps Jesus shows up in the person who has a different accent than you. Maybe it's that South Philly accent, which I've noticed is this whole thing in and of itself, or maybe it's someone like me who comes from the Southern United States, or maybe it's even someone who comes from south of the US border.

Y'all, all of these people are Jesus in our midst. [00:13:30] Perhaps Jesus is someone who has a different job than you, who has a different socioeconomic status than you. Who goes to a different church than you, who worships differently than you. Perhaps Jesus is the individual who likes a good folksy campfire sing-along. Perhaps Jesus is the individual who is celebrating Ramadan this month as our Muslim siblings are. [00:14:00] Perhaps Jesus is someone who loves differently than you, whose family is structured differently than yours. Perhaps Jesus is someone who you think there's a giant chasm between y'all, but really the Holy Spirit is working to bring you closer together.

My friends, Jesus is here. Do we recognize him? [00:14:30] Do we see him? Do we name and claim his presence together? Our God is in the here and now. Our God is in our friends who we love, who we've known for months or years or decades, even. And Jesus is in the stranger that we are going to meet tomorrow afternoon. And if we, as disciples of Jesus, as we, as followers of the Holy One, if we actually begin [00:15:00] to recognize and see Jesus on a daily basis, maybe we're going to start to love like Jesus too. Maybe we're going to start to approach this world with humility and wonder and that self-sacrificial love that Jesus modeled in his ministry, his life, his death, and his resurrection.

Maybe [00:15:30] we'll start to love like Jesus does, and maybe we too will begin to realize that y'all God, our Jesus, the Christ is within our own selves too. My friends, do not be afraid. It's okay to doubt sometimes, and always remember [00:16:00] that Jesus shows up. Jesus is here. All we have to do is open our eyes and see his presence in the one before us. Amen.