

## Sermon 2023 03 17 Text

In the name of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Companion on the Journey. Amen.

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### John 12.26-28

<sup>26</sup> Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour. <sup>27</sup> 'Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say— "Father, save me from this hour"? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. <sup>28</sup> Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.'

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The writer of our Lenten Study this week seems to have departed from the consistent form of some sort of harmony to create what they summarise as, "To see Jesus is to engage with the truth."

But I think they misjudged their own reflected story. What I see in the story is a truth that is consistent in the public and private Jesus; and in the living and dying Jesus.

In each of those moments the story never changes – this sounds weird to say but the Jesus that is encountered is always the same Jesus regardless of the circumstances. That truth may be played out in different circumstances, but it is forever consistent from birth to death to resurrection and beyond.

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We may access a large variety of news, but I find if I do that, I quite frequently come from that encounter, reflecting on the encounter, but, like Pilate, asking the perennial question, “What is the truth?”

Even I can remember a time when the print media, radio and television would broadcast someone’s who speech. So, you heard both the text and context. The best you can hope for now is a few words, the sound bite, ripped from the greater creature of the speech and then editorialised – given context and meaning by the organisation that has broadcast has presented that snippet.

We are the recipients of generated news where someone has chosen what we should listen to and have then given us the context in which the words should be heard.

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And as one who preaches, I too have the capacity to do that. That is why we offer the whole readings before the sermon.

Otherwise, I could lift out the statement, “Father, save me from this hour”? and give a long dissertation about how Jesus did not really love us, or how he was forced into being crucified by some sort of child abusing Father.

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Text and context are as essential in the proclamation of the good news as they are in the daily news.

And that is certainly one reason why the people od God must read their Bibles. Because if you do not know the text and the context you can be led astray.

And remember always that as God is a gatekeeper to my mouth, you too must be gatekeepers of the message proclaimed. We are all guardians of the good news; charged with protecting its integrity and the honesty with which it is proclaimed.

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But we must handle that task with loving integrity. We must not use our desire to protect truth and particularly the truth of Jesus to prevent others from accessing the truth of Scripture or from encountering the crucified, risen, and ascended Jesus.

We must never become aggressive, or for that matter, passive gatekeepers of the capacity of others to enter into relationship with the Christ.

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And that sentence, in a sense, binds us up. We are charged from birth to protect the truth of the gospel, but we must never become so protective that we prohibit the ongoing revelation between God and humanity. We are custodians of story, but we are not gatekeepers who prevent the ongoing revelation of truth.

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Harking back to the theme of our Study, that an encounter with Jesus is an encounter with truth, we must be careful to protect, but never impede.

There is almost a humorous quality about the Greeks who desire to meet Jesus at the start of our Gospel.

They imagine that to encounter the saviour of humanity is not an easy thing – that they will have to pass through all kinds of checks before they are permitted an audience. It is bewildering to them that they should be given almost immediate access.

Jesus travelled among a group who sought to learn and understand – he did not walk surrounded by bodyguards who prevented his interaction with a desperate humanity in need of salvation. Even when the disciples attempted to chase away the children so Jesus could rest were chastised.

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We were a people in need of salvation. That salvation is found in the truth of Christ on the Cross in life and death and beyond that in life beyond the cross. All have access to this truth, and we must never prevent anyone from accessing this truth.

But we are also guardians of this truth – not to prevent people encountering the living Christ, not to prevent the ongoing process of revelation between God and the people of creation, but to prevent the manipulation of the truth of Jesus being used to bind up people and hold them captive.

There is a clear and open path for us to walk from where we are now into the embracing arms of the Christ without any impediment and to rest in his arms, made whole, by his sacrificial love.

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