

Daily Discipleship

Fifth Sunday in Lent (B) – John 12:20-33

The Path of Discipleship – *In the Footsteps*

Focus Question: *What does it mean to follow in the footsteps of Jesus?*

word of life

“Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also.

Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.” John 12:26 (NRSV)

Read John 12:20-33

It was the time of Passover in Jerusalem with the city full of people who had come from many lands for the festivities. Some Greeks had arrived who desired to meet with Jesus. How fascinating to observe Philip from Bethsaida as the one who attempts to connect these visitors with Jesus. Philip seems to be a personality who connects people with others. In John 1:43-51, it is Philip who, after being called by Jesus, goes to Nathaniel and invites him to come and meet Jesus. Philip’s words are simple, “Come and see.” To respond to the request from the Greeks, he seeks Andrew and together they approach Jesus.

1. *Why might Philip have gone to Andrew for assistance?*

Jesus does not seem to respond directly to the request concerning the Greeks; instead, he begins to speak about a grain of wheat falling into the earth to die. Only through death would the single grain be able to bear much fruit. Philip and Andrew were probably stumped by Jesus’ answer. It didn’t seem to relate to the request by the Greeks. Keep in mind this story follows Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem with people shouting “Hosanna!” Jesus seems clearly focused on his purpose to fulfill in his week in Jerusalem.

2. *How is this image of the death of the grain relevant to this final week in the life of Jesus?*

The words that follow from Jesus are convicting and are intended to weed out lukewarm followers. Jesus challenges those who love their life. In the end, they will lose their life. But for those who are willing to lose their life in this world, they will have eternal life. Jesus calls followers to serve him and follow on the path of discipleship. To walk in the footsteps of Jesus is to be a servant.

3. *What happened to the Greeks in the story?*
4. *If the Greeks were able to hear Jesus’ words, what might have been their reaction?*

Jesus speaks candidly about the challenges that lie ahead of him. He admits his desire to pray to God for rescue from the very hour of suffering and pain; yet, at the same time, Jesus is well aware of his purpose and the need for his suffering.

5. *How does it feel to hear of the troubled soul of Jesus?*
6. *Is it troubling or assuring to see a very human side of Jesus? Explain.*

Once more a voice from heaven intervenes. The voice is accompanied by thunder. An angel speaks directly to Jesus, but the words are not shared in scripture.

7. *What might have the angel have said?*

In the end, Jesus seems reassured. He will continue his path to the cross, knowing his death will draw all people to him.

word *among us*

Samuel was thrilled. He had spent his life as a lawyer and dreamed one of his children might decide to go into law. Finally his wish came true. His youngest child passed the law exam, but there were still some unknowns. Would this new lawyer join Samuel in his law practice?

To celebrate the occasion, he proudly took his family out for dinner at a fancy restaurant. After the meal was finished, his youngest child stood in front of the family and announced the decision. “I have decided to follow in my father’s footsteps and practice law with my father.” Quickly, Samuel jumped to his feet and gave the newest lawyer in the family a hug and said, “Julie, you have made my day. It will be a joy to have you work with me.”

Actually, he was quite surprised his daughter had chosen this path. Many years ago, Samuel had given up a lucrative career to work with the poorest of the poor. He took on clients discarded by many colleagues. Over the years, Samuel had developed a passion to be an advocate for those who suffered injustice. Realistically, he knew it wasn’t the most attractive career for a young ambitious lawyer like his daughter.

Samuel did not know his daughter had been watching him. She had noticed his slowness of step and his lower energy level. She suspected his weak heart had weakened more, but it was typical for her father not to share such news with the family.

Julie had known for some time about her decision. There was nothing more that she wanted but to work beside her father, to learn from his experience and establish her career. She yearned to glean from his wisdom, absorb his compassion, and continue his legacy of advocacy. Julie knew it wasn’t the typical first step for a talented lawyer, but it was a great decision for her personal life. She was determined to savor every moment with her beloved father.

1. *What did it mean for Julie to walk in the footsteps of her father?*
2. *How does walking in someone’s footsteps relate to coaching or mentoring?*
3. *What does it mean to walk in the footsteps of Jesus?*

In this passage, Jesus is clearly aware he is heading to his death. The Greeks do not distract him. He continues a course, but the path involves sacrifice and death. Despite this clarity, Jesus struggles and his soul is troubled. His prayer becomes, “Father glorify your name.”

4. *What might it mean this week to lose your life and serve others?*
5. *What changes might you need to make in your life in order to better follow in the footsteps of Jesus?*

Prayer

Gentle Jesus, be with us in our struggles and troubled times. Teach us to pray, “Father, glorify your name.” Amen

Dig Deeper

John 13:1-20

last word

Give up a favorite activity this week
and spend the time in prayer.



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