

## REFLECTION<sup>1</sup>

Last two weeks, we read about Paul<sup>2</sup>, asking the people what they were waiting to see again to recognize Jesus as the promised Messiah. He categorically mentioned that:

For Jews demand signs, and Greeks desire wisdom (1 Cor. 1:22)

Therefore, reading the gospel today from John raises some questions about why these Greeks wanted to see Jesus.

Have they now seen enough signs or wisdom affirming Jesus as the Messiah, or do they want to see Jesus and possibly ask more questions to acquire more wisdom? It's not really that I believe, but John wants to draw our attention to something significant.

The arrival of the Greeks who want to see Jesus in the reading marks the beginning of a new season. These "Greeks", as mentioned in the reading, are to be distinguished from Greek-speaking Jews. Because they have made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover feast, they may be Gentiles, but what the Fourth Evangelist (John) intends to underscore is that they are non-Jews, representatives of the Gentile world—attempting to draw our attention to the fact that these non-Jews who had come for this Passover saw the need to see Jesus and draw our attention to the fact that Jesus came for everyone. John pointed out that Jesus invites all to come to him. And just as we are Jesus' disciples, we are to be a channel through which others can see Jesus.

Like Philip and Andrew, in the call narrative of John 1:35-46, John suggests Andrew and Philip as among the first Jewish disciples to be called by Jesus. Their presence here establishes a connection between the call of the first Jewish disciples and the arrival of the first Gentile disciples. This prefigures the church's future mission to the Gentiles and the inclusion of Gentiles (non-Jews) in God's promises. Jesus invites all, and in Jesus, there are no Jews or Gentiles; all who come to him are accepted and included.

These people went to see Philip; then he went to Andrew, and then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. What prevented Philip from walking straight to Jesus or even Andrew from choosing to go and see Jesus with Philip? One thing stood out for me: they trusted each

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Jeremiah 31:31-34 and John 12:20-33.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:18-25.

other, checked with each other, and each wanted to lead these people to Jesus. They did not prevent the Greeks Gentiles) from seeing Jesus but led them to Jesus. Leading people to Jesus is our role as disciples of Jesus. We are called to lead our friends, family, and community to see Jesus for this reason and purpose.

Leading People to Jesus is embedded in our vision and mission:

- We aim to be a diverse community (Jews and Gentiles) with the crucified risen Lord Jesus Christ as our guiding light, spreading the good news of reconciliation to all. We have agreed to spread the good news of reconciliation to all, suggesting that through us, people can see Jesus and recognize Him.
- We aim to welcome all newcomers, encourage spiritual growth in all members of the community, nurture faith in children and young people and care for those in need, again, there is that voice of leading each other to nurture and grow in their faith.
- We will strive to achieve this by committing ourselves to God through love, worship, prayer, Bible study, and diligent management of our time, talents, and resources.

To be a welcoming community leading people to God's love.

Jesus calls us to use our gifts and talents as children, youth, and adults to help ourselves and others to see more of Jesus. We are called to be involved in God's ministry; whichever way we can contribute to this community, Jesus welcomes you. God invites us to be a channel through which the world can see Jesus; we don't need to be perfect. We are encouraged to sow whatever seed we have in our hands.

Jesus said,

"Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies, it bears much fruit." (John 12:24)

I am not a good farmer, though, but I know that it takes a seed for us to get produce. When it dies and germinates, that tiny seed gives us a lot of produce. When we stop planting seeds, we shall all starve. Farmers' actions keep us nourished and alive, a grain, a seed.

Jesus is showing us two things here

- 1) we, too, need to be ready to follow Jesus's footsteps and be willing to use the gifts, talents or whatever we must help people see Jesus. If we want to see God's

kingdom flourishing, God is calling us to start this together, but it begins with you and me.

2) Jesus is telling them about his impending death using the farmer's scenario. He will be crucified, but his death and resurrection will be the beginning of the church. It will fulfil the new covenant we read from the prophet Jeremiah. He is the word and will be in the hearts of many who come to him.

Through Jesus we have a new understanding and revelation of who God is and what God wish for all. In reflecting on Jesus's suffering, self-giving, death and resurrection during this Lent season, we, too, reflect on our humanity. During this, there is a call to know that we are loved and accepted by Jesus, and it also calls us to be a channel of blessing for others. Be a book of comfort for others. The new covenant, Jeremiah 30-31, forms a textual unit sometimes called "The Book of Comfort."

In the new covenant, God will place the divine law in the people's hearts. The law will now be written on the hearts of people.

In the new covenant, God will forgive all our sins and no longer remember them. The new covenant removes the expectations placed on people, and God's instruction for living is written in their hearts.

The call for us now is to feel assured that God has a covenantal relationship with us and sees us as friends. This relationship calls us not to be afraid but to step out and be the best version of ourselves. Like Philip and Andrew, we are called to help others to see Jesus. Like Jesus, whatever we want to achieve as youth takes prayers, sacrifice, and commitment. You are not alone in whatever situation you trust God for; God is in it with you. Don't be discouraged; God walks with you.

By Rev Samuel Annan