

In the year 2000, ABC News did a documentary that was entitled The Search for Jesus. The opening scene begins with a voice-over from late celebrated reporter Peter Jennings. He's reading the Christmas story out of Luke against the backdrop of a Middle Eastern man carving the face of Jesus into a block of wood. As the man finishes and sets the carving down, and as Jennings finishes the Scripture, the camera focuses on Jennings standing in a garden to introduce the documentary. His opening lines highlight the interest that even the secular media has in Jesus.

"Hello, I'm Peter Jennings, and we have been searching for Jesus—as reporters, that is, because it's an irresistible story. And whatever your faith or religion, there's simply no denying the extraordinary influence that Jesus has had—that he does have—in people's lives.

The search for Jesus is nothing new. There is a place in scripture where Greeks came to one of the disciples and said, "We want to see Jesus." What would you do if someone came to you and made that statement?

Let's see what the disciples did. And, let's see what Jesus did.

John 12:20-26

20 Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast;

21 these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

*22 Philip *came and *told Andrew; Andrew and Philip *came and *told Jesus.*

*23 And Jesus *answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*

24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

25 He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.

26 If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

These Greeks came for the Passover. They were either God-fearers, that is, Greeks who did not enter Judaism, but knew God existed. The other possibility was they were proselytes, Greeks who had converted to Judaism. Anyhow, their request was to see Jesus. When Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus, His response was puzzling to say the least. The seeking Greeks may have been in the audience who heard what Jesus says next. If so, the response Jesus gives is for all who choose to follow Him.

After studying these verses for some time, what became apparent to me is this. To see Jesus as He intends for all to see Him, he will have to be like a grain of wheat, fall in the ground and die. Obviously, this is talking of His own death and burial. But then Jesus says that if we want to see Jesus, we must be willing to follow Him and do the same as He did. Jesus is no longer physically present. However, if we want others to see Jesus, we must be the closest thing they will come to seeing Jesus. It may be that by seeing Jesus in our lives, they also may choose to follow Jesus. His death for our salvation becomes His design for us to follow.

There is a command found in this passage. It is in verse 26. "If anyone serves Me, He must follow Me."

Follow Me. That is an important command that is found throughout scripture. It means to follow as a disciple. To be a disciple is to be a student, a pupil, a learner. The students of those days did not just attend classes as we do today. The students of that day lived with the teacher. They ate with the teacher. All of their free time was spent with the teacher. Before long, the teacher's influence will begin to show. The students began to think like the teacher, to talk like the teacher and to behave like the teacher. Not long afterwards, people will begin to see the teacher in the students. Do you understand how that applies to Jesus and us? Now, listen to me very closely. Our call to salvation is not only a delivery from sin and hell. It is at the same time a call to be a disciple. It is a call to follow Him. So, that commandment of verse 26 applies to us today. There are no two different groups, the Christians and the disciples. There is no such thing as a group who have Jesus as Savior, but not Lord, and another group who have Jesus as Savior and Lord. There are no elite Christians who have a special calling to be disciples. There are no special forces of the Christian life. There are no spiritual Navy Seals or Green Berets.

So, the question is what does this command look like lived out.

Jesus answers the question in these verses. What is interesting is that with each demand comes a blessing for meeting the demand.

Here are the demands: Die as a grain of wheat, hate your life of this world, and serve Him. Here are the blessings: you will bear fruit, you will have eternal life, you will be where He is, and you will be honored by the Father.

First demand: Die as a grain of wheat.

The death may be figurative. Jesus talks about dying to self, dying to your rights. Paul says, "I die daily." Romans 6 talks about dying with Christ. It is putting away the desires of our sinful, human nature. It is dying to our selfish desires, so that Christ may live.

Galatians 2:20 ²⁰ *I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and ^{at}the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*

The death may be figurative. But the death may also be literal. Augustine said it best, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

For 30 years, Tom and Libby Little served in Afghanistan, providing vision care to the people of Kabul throughout seemingly endless wars and conflict.

In August 2010, shortly after conducting a two-week medical camp in a remote valley of northwestern Afghanistan, Tom and his medical team were ambushed and killed. Upon receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom for her husband, Libby said, "Although Tom was killed in 2010, he had already surrendered his life to God's good purposes way back in 1967." For four decades, Tom had submitted himself to his divine master. So in one sense, Tom Little had already died in Christ prior to 1967, and he would always live through Christ even though he was ambushed and killed in Afghanistan.

For each of the demands comes blessings and rewards. For those who die as a seed of wheat, they bear fruit. You will bear fruit of good works, fruit of persons who come to Christ because of their witness.

Second demand: Hate your life of this world.

We must understand the Jewish mindset of hate. It is not the hatred that we are told not to have towards one another. The Jewish mindset of hate is giving preference of one thing over another. When we are to hate our life of this world, it is to give preference to Jesus over our life of this world. In this context, it is giving preference to Jesus over one's family, possessions, goals, plans, desires, even our own life. It is setting your priorities on Christ and life of Christ over priorities of this world. Is Christ the most important thing to you? Your lifestyle will tell the truth.

Matthew 10:37-39

³⁷ "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."³⁸ And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹ He who has found his [a]life will lose it, and he who has lost his [b]life for My sake will find it.

There is a young man in Baltimore, Maryland who was a youth minister in a large church in California. He was in a comfortable position in California, youth director of an established church. However, we was not satisfied. He didn't like his life in this world even though most would be settled in it and rationalize that they were following God's plan. He wanted to do more. After praying about it, God told him to move to Baltimore to plant a church. He is a church planter of the Send Cities strategy of the NAMB. When he got to Baltimore, he found a job in the area where he wanted to plant a church. It was a job in a thrift store that was failing. He made a deal with the owners of the store. If he helped them revive the store, will they let him use the store on Sunday for a place to worship for his new church? The deal was made. Today the store is a healthy business. His church meets and grows in the store.

The benefit of giving preference to Jesus over anything of this life? Eternal life. That does not only mean life everafter. It means abundant life, fulfilled life in the here and now.

Third demand: Serve Him.

Verse 26 – If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me.

To serve Him here is to take the role of a waiter at his table to do his bidding, no matter what the demand or how lowly the status.

The benefits are double. Where I am, there will be the servant also. Does that sound familiar? Where I am, there you may be also. The benefit of serving Him because we must follow Him is glory with Jesus in heaven. It is not a works, but faith. We follow by faith. We serve by faith. Faith is rewarded with the visible glory of heaven. The second benefit, we will be honored by the Father.

So don't miss the glory and the overflowing joy in this hard life of being a Christian.

- We die; but in dying we bear fruit.
- We hate our lives in this world; but in the hating we keep our lives for eternal life.
- We follow Jesus on the Calvary road; but we join Him where He is in glory.
- We become servants; but we will be honored by the Father.

We want to see Jesus. How do we see Jesus? His dying for our salvation becomes His design for our imitation. When we follow Him by dying, hating our lives in this world, and serving Him, we are obeying the command of following Him. That's how you see Jesus. Others will see Him also. They will either reject Him, or be drawn to Him. When we follow Him as He states here, that is revival. When others are drawn to Him resulting in their salvation, that is spiritual awakening. Follow Me! It's a command. Are you being obedient.

As you walk out the back of this church, look in that mirror and ask, do others see Jesus in me.