

T. Austin-Sparks:

Reading: John twelve, verses twenty to twenty-six:

"And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour."

In order to appreciate the meaning of these verses, it is necessary for us to see their setting. If you will look again, you will find that these words were said at the time of the Jewish passover. The great Jewish passover was about to be celebrated in Jerusalem, and Jews from all over the world were gathered in the city. Jews out of every nation were represented there at this time. But there was something special about this particular passover. It was the last passover in the earthly life of the Lord Jesus. It was the last time that He would keep the passover on this earth. If you read on in this Gospel, you will see that it was not long after this that Jesus kept the passover with His disciples in the upper room. That is what He meant when He said here, "The hour is come that the Son of Man must be glorified." This was one of the greatest hours in the history of this world. So that everything that was happening carried a very special significance for the Lord Jesus.

Among the many peoples who had come to Jerusalem for this passover were these Greeks. We do not know why they wanted to see Jesus. But that does not matter very much. Jesus was being talked about everywhere. Everybody was speaking of His miracles and of His teaching, and no doubt His fame had gone far and wide. When these Greeks came to Jerusalem, they found that everybody was talking about this Person called Jesus of Nazareth. So they thought that they would like to see Him, and they came to one of His disciples and they said, "Sir, we would see Jesus." They wanted an introduction to Jesus.

Let us say again that all nations were represented in Jerusalem at that time. These particular visitors said, "We would see Jesus." Jesus did not say, 'Well, bring them to Me,' or 'I will come out to them. I will grant them their request, and let them see Me.' He did not go to them and say, 'Now what is it you want to see?' He said something that did not seem to have any connection with their desire. He immediately uttered these remarkable words, He said, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified." "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth by itself alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

What did Jesus mean by saying that, at that time? Men said, "We would see Jesus." Jesus answered, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die." Is that any answer at all? It does not look like an answer to their question. It almost looks as though He is ignoring their request. It seems as though He is talking about something else altogether. He did not seem to take any notice of these Greeks. He did not say, 'Well, they want to see Me. I will go out and show Myself to them.' He did not say, 'Bring them to Me.' And when they came He did not say, 'Well, here I Am, now you can see Me.' He said, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth by itself alone." And yet, in those words, He answered their question. He answered their question in a much more wonderful way than ever they expected. What Jesus really meant was the way in which they wanted to see Me is not the true way. They will only see Me as Jesus of Nazareth. They will only see Me as an object of their curiosity. They will only see Me as Somebody about Whom people are talking. They will only see Me as Someone Who is of interest here in Jerusalem at this time. And that is not the true way to see Jesus. And so He said this seemingly, mysterious thing.

What He meant was this: It is not the historical Jesus, it is not the physical Jesus. But it is the Jesus of death and resurrection. The only way in which you will see Jesus will be as THE RISEN LORD; the One Who has gone into death and has triumphed over death and Who Lives for evermore as the conqueror of death. And we, here today, know that He was right. We are a company of several hundred; but all over this world today, there are millions of people like ourselves, people who know that the Lord Jesus is alive, people who have the experience of the living Christ, people who know that although He became dead, He is alive for evermore.

I say there are millions of such people on the earth today. How many more millions there are in Heaven since Jesus was here, we do not know. John, in the Book of the Revelation describes it in this way, "A great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations - ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" (Rev. 7:9; 5:11). Now I expect there are some mathematicians here today, but here is something that

goes beyond your best mathematical ability. John finds it quite impossible to describe. Thousands and ten thousands and thousands of thousands, and a great multitude which no man could number. Out of every nation and kindred and tongue, and they all came from one little grain of wheat. One grain of wheat which fell into the ground and died, and then was raised from the dead by God Almighty. When you see that great multitude on earth and in heaven, then you see Jesus.

These Greeks said, "We would see Jesus." But Jesus said, 'This is not the way to see Me. If you really want to see Me, you will have to see Me in Resurrection with My Life distributed into a great multitude which no man can number. That is the way,' says Jesus, 'In which you will truly see Me.' All the nations were represented in Jerusalem, but Jesus is saying, 'I shall be seen in men and women out of every nation.' Now that is the great truth that is set forth here. It is a very wonderful thing, but of course it is a great challenge. What does it say to us? It just simply says this, that if we are united to the Lord Jesus, He is to be seen through us!

He has His Own personal existence in Heaven, but so far as this world is concerned, and so far as eternity is concerned, He has got to be seen in His Own people. Do you see what a challenge that is? If anybody in this world says, "We would see Jesus," they ought not have to go to Jerusalem, or to any part of the world. Their question ought to be answered by us. They ought to see Him in us. It ought to be possible for people to say in that man and in that woman, 'I have seen Jesus. In that company of Christians, I have seen Jesus.' I used to say, 'I would see Jesus,' but I have come to see Jesus in His Own children. Jesus has no other way of showing Himself to this world, but through you and through me. And the only purpose for which we are here as the Lord's people is to show Jesus to the world, that if anybody wants to see Jesus, they can see Him in us.

Do you notice that Jesus here passes immediately from Himself to other people? First, He is saying that He is this grain of wheat, "The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified." - I am the grain of wheat. Then, He immediately passes to others and He says, "He that would save His life shall lose it." He brings us into this matter. He is not alone. He brings us alongside of Himself to show Himself to the world. Having said that, we must look at this law of manifestation, because what was true of Him, has got to be true of us. And if He says that the way of true manifestation is through death and resurrection, that is what He means by, "He that keeps his life, will lose it. He that loses his life for My sake, shall keep it." He is only saying that we have got to go the same way as He went. We have to go the way of death and resurrection in union with Him. This is the law of manifestation: What was true of Him, has got to be true of us.

Now I am not speaking about the death of our bodies, and I am not speaking about going into the grave of the cemetery, and some day when the trumpet sounds, we shall be raised from the dead. That is not what is meant here. This death and resurrection is a spiritual experience. It is the experience which has to come into the life of every true believer. Many of you know what the Apostle Paul wrote in the sixth chapter of the Letter to the Romans. He said, 'We were crucified with Christ, that is, when Christ died, we died in Him, we were buried together with Him. When He was buried, we were buried in Him. We were raised together with Him, and we walk in newness of life.' That is a spiritual experience. It all has to lay right at the foundation of every Christian life, and believe me, dear friends, Jesus will never be seen until we have that experience. Only as we go THAT WAY will we be a revelation of Jesus Christ. It is through crucified men and women that Jesus is seen. The law of the true manifestation of Christ is the law of death and resurrection union with Christ.

Let us come back to this grain of wheat. Jesus said that He was that grain of wheat, and it falls into the ground, and it dies. What does it die to? If you were to open the ground after a week or two, and look for your grain of wheat, what would you find? You would find that nine tenths of it had gone. You would not be able to find the greater part. All that you would find would be just a little germ, a very small part of that grain of wheat. All the other has gone. What is it that has gone? Well, all that which was capable of seeing corruption has gone. And that which cannot die remains, and it is that which is raised again. What are these nine tenths that had to go? Now if you know anything about yourself, you know quite well that that describes you. The greater part of us is ourselves. "The self-life," what the New Testament calls "the flesh," and in the death of Jesus, the self-life has to go. In order that that true Life of Christ may be raised from the dead. So to die with Christ, to be crucified with Christ, just means that the self-life has been put to death. The self-life has been buried in the grave of Jesus.

We know what the Apostle Paul meant when he said, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20; ASV). "No longer I, but Christ." I have died with Christ, and now it is just Christ Who lives in me. And if Christ lives in you and in me, other people will see Jesus. So that the law of seeing Jesus is union with Him in death and resurrection. It is death to all the self-life. Now what happens to this little grain of wheat? It has surrendered a great deal of itself, but when that has taken place, the life that is in that little germ is released. It is no longer in bondage to things here. No longer in bondage to this world. No longer in bondage to all the limitations of this life. Through death, this Life is released. It is like a prisoner set

free.

You remember on the Mount of Transfiguration, it says that Moses and Elijah were speaking to Jesus, and it tells us what they were speaking to Him about. Perhaps you have not noticed that. You know about the transfiguration. And you know that it says that Moses and Elijah were there speaking to Him. And perhaps you have not noticed what they were talking about, but it tells us what they were speaking to Him about, and here unfortunately our translation does not have it. In the original language, it says they were speaking to Him about the EXODUS that He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. Everybody who knows the Old Testament knows what the exodus is. There is a book in the Old Testament that goes by the name of Exodus. It is the book of the story of the deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. God broke their bondage. They went out a free people, and they sang a great song of deliverance. They were able to say, 'We are out at last. We have had our exodus, we are free.' They can sing about their deliverance from bondage. Now that is exactly the same word as is used here on the Mount of Transfiguration. Moses and Elijah were talking to Him about the exodus which He was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. His Cross was going to be His exodus, His deliverance from all bondage. In His Resurrection, He would be free. The Life which was in Him would be released.

So we come back to our grain of wheat. It falls into the ground and it dies, and then its Life is released, and up that Life comes. You see a little green shoot coming through the earth. It grows and it grows, and then there begins to form the whole wonderful combination of that grain - what we call the ear of corn. Let us take this ear in our hands. What have we got here? Not one grain, there may be fifty in one ear, or it may be more than that. Then we take every one of these, and we let them fall into the ground and die. And if it is fifty grains, we are going to have fifty times fifty. If you go on like that, this thing will spread all over the world. All this worldwide testimony has come from the release of the Life of one grain. If you look into every one of the millions of grains, you will find the Life of the original grain. So it is not only a case of multiplication of Christians, it is a case of the re-embodiment of Christ's Life in every one. In His death and resurrection, His wonderful Life was released, and that Life has passed into every true believer. Jesus said, "I am come that they might have Life, and that they might have it abundantly." He came into this world for that special purpose. So that it is His Life in us, which reveals Him to the world.

But let us look still more closely. The law of seeing Jesus is the law of sacrifice. Jesus said, "He that keepeth his life" - there is such a thing as keeping your life to yourself, of holding on to your own life, of saying this life is mine. This belongs to me, I keep it to myself. Jesus said, "He that keepeth his life shall lose it." "He that loses it" - or lets it go - "shall find it unto Life eternal." The law then is the law of sacrifice. The law of letting go our life for Christ. Do you want to find your true vocation in this world? Do you want to find the true purpose for which God created you? Do you want to find the true purpose for which Christ died for you? Do you want to know what God wants to do with you? And God does want to do something with you. He has called you according to a great purpose, and every one of you has a place in the thought of God. There is some purpose relating to your life in God's will. There is a vocation with which you are called in Christ. Do you want to find what that is? Do you want to know what Christ has called you to? Well, here is the law. While you hold on to your life for yourself, you will never know. Jesus says, "He that loses his life shall find it;" that is, whoever will give up his own life for My sake shall find the purpose of his life.

Now the disciples of Jesus had great ideas for their own life. They had their own ambitions in life. Sometimes they said to Jesus, "Grant that when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom, we may sit one on Thy right hand, and one on Thy left hand." And we read that they had a quarrel one day. Think of the disciples of Jesus quarreling. They are having a really hot dispute. One is saying no, and the other is saying yes, and what is it they are quarreling about? Who shall be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

See, they got an idea of the Kingdom as being something of this world, and of themselves as being very important people of that Kingdom. They had ambitions for themselves, and their lives. They had their own ideas of what they wanted to be and wanted to do. But look at them after the Cross of Jesus. That Cross has struck a very heavy blow to these disciples. All those old ideas are gone, all their own personal ambitions are gone, and now it is only for Christ that they want to live. So disciples became apostles: From something just local, they became worldwide; from something just of time, they became eternal. After two thousand years we are still reading about them. We are still getting values from them. If the world goes on for another two thousand years, it will be the same. Of course, it may not go on for another two thousand years, but as long as this world does last, the values of these men's lives will be going out to people everywhere.

They let go their own ambitions for Christ. They died to their own thoughts and plans for themselves in order to have Christ's plan. They found their true life's work when they put themselves wholly into the hands of the Lord Jesus. When they said to Him, 'Lord, not my way, but Your way; not my will, but Your will, not my plans for my

life, but Your plan; not my ambitions, Lord, but what You want for my life.'

So we pass from just being ordinary people living a life for so many years and then going into the grave. There comes into our life this wonderful thing. Jesus is seen. Jesus lives through us. There is no greater thing to live for than that, and if anybody in this world is hungry to see Jesus, if there is anybody who is really in their heart saying, "I would see Jesus." Do you know what the Spirit of God will do? Jesus will not come down out of Heaven to that person. He will not say personally, "Here I am." He will lead that hungry soul to you. He will bring those who want to know Him to you. He will bring you to them. You know, the New Testament has a lot about that.

There was a man, once, who was traveling in his chariot across the desert. He had been up to the feast at Jerusalem, but his heart was hungry. All the religion in Jerusalem, had not satisfied his heart. He had heard the priests talking. He had seen the sacrifices being offered. He had seen all the crowds filling the temple, but he was going away, back to his country, a disappointed man. His heart was still hungry. All that religion had failed to satisfy his heart; and as he was sitting in his chariot, going back to his far away country, he was reading the Old Testament. And he was reading the Prophet Isaiah, he came to chapter fifty-three. He read that chapter. And he said, "I wonder what that means. I would give a lot if only I understood what this prophet is talking about."

And as he traveled with his heart toward God, God knew about that hungry heart, and God had a man some distance away. He said to that man, 'Go down to the desert, I have a piece of work for you to do there.' He did not know what he was going for, but he obeyed the Lord, and he traveled all the way from Samaria down to the desert. And as he was wondering what it all meant, he saw this chariot coming along. And the Lord said, "Go and join yourself to that chariot." And as he got near, he heard this man reading the Scripture, and he said to him, "Do you understand what you are reading?" The man said, "How can I understand it if no one teaches me? Who is the prophet speaking about?"

And Philip opened his mouth at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And the man saw; and when they came to a certain water; and he said to Philip, "Here is water; what does hinder me to be baptized? What does hinder me from being united with this Christ, in death and burial and resurrection?" Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, thou mayest." The man evidently said, 'Yes, I believe with all my heart.' And both of them went down to the water, and Philip baptized him. The end of the story is: "And the man went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:26-39). God knows where there are hungry hearts. God needs to have people who know the Lord Jesus. And God will bring them together.

Perhaps you are a hungry heart. Perhaps religion has not satisfied you. Perhaps you are still wanting to see Jesus. Well, the Lord will bring somebody across your path. He will arrange that your heart does not remain hungry. He will bring you into touch with that which helps you, which will lead you into a real experience of Christ, and you will go on your way rejoicing. That is, if you do what this man in the chariot did, believe with all your heart and surrender your life wholly to the Lord Jesus, and then the world will see Jesus through you.