



# Sunday Reflection

## Season of Lent

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew  
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 21 March 2021

## Lent 5 -Passiontide begins

Christ's work brought a new relationship with God, which extends to all people. We consider how to deepen our relationship and become more in tune with God's purpose for us and for the world.

### Reflection for this week's Gospel

**"Some Greeks... came to Philip... and said to him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.'" John 12:20-21**

#### **An Illustration to set the scene**

A leading communications agency lists thirty-five ways that politicians avoid answering interview questions.

Their list is based on the work of British communication expert Peter Bull, who identified these techniques, calling them "equivocation".

The list includes acknowledging the question without answering it, providing an incomplete answer, and repeating the answer to the previous question.

The most popular technique is to attack the question, and Bull has divided this approach into eight different sub-categories, including claiming that the question is offensive or does not address the key topic.

Why do politicians behave like this?

Peter Bull believes it is all about trying not to lose face – their own, that of the party and that of important stakeholders. He then lists thirteen ways of losing face.

It all seems very complicated, but Bull is convinced that politicians are just like everyone else. We all try not to lose face.

Further analysis suggests that it is not all the fault of the politicians. In at least forty per cent of cases the interviewer consciously tries to pose the question in such a way that the politician is unable to answer without suffering loss of face. Journalists are trained this way.

They assume that politicians will give an evasive response to anything they ask, so to try to get a straight answer they pose a closed question – one that requires a "yes" or "no" answer.

The politician avoids responding to the direct question, perhaps because the subject is too complicated, and gives an evasive response anyway.

## **Looking at the teaching of the Gospel**

Today's Gospel begins with some Greeks, in other words Gentiles, asking Philip if they can see Jesus. Philip tells Andrew and they both go and give the request to Jesus himself.

Jesus appears to say nothing about the Greeks in his response.

Instead, he answers that the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified and continues to describe the consequences of his impending death.

He then admits that the prospect of what is to come is troubling, but determines that this is the reason he has arrived at this appointed hour.

In response to his request that the Father glorify God's name, a voice comes from heaven proclaiming that the Father has glorified it and will again.

Although it is audible to the crowd, they are confused and not sure what they have heard.

The answer Jesus gives seems to be a classic case of evading the question, but in fact he is explaining how it is that Gentiles everywhere will be able to see him.

It is his death that opens up the relationship with God beyond the Jews to the wider Gentile world.

### **How can we reflect on the application to our lives?**

We human beings have so many questions to ask God.

We may want to make specific requests: "Please end this difficult situation," or "Please give me this thing I desire so much."

We hope for a "yes" or "no" answer – usually for a "yes", but sometimes a "no" would at least bring clarification.

But, like the journalists, we are asking questions that put God on the spot.

We're not doing so deliberately, perhaps, but because of our lack of understanding of God's wider context and purposes. God is not evasive, but the answers to what we want to know are often wider than our narrow perspective and we find it hard to hear them.

We are more likely to find answers, or even to find that answers become unimportant, not by bombarding God with specific questions but by growing closer to the mystery.

Sometimes, at least, our politicians may really be trying to do the right thing and getting to know them in a broader sense may answer some of our questions.

Getting to know God, the ground of our being, in a deeper way may change the question from the "Why?" or the "Please give me..." to a "What should I do to further the kingdom?"

What seemed important may fade into the background as we gain a wider sense of God in deeper listening and meditative prayer.

We may even reach the point where questions no longer matter in the face of profound, meaningful and fulfilling relationship.

Our complicated world and our pressing questions may recede in the face of the simplicity of pure relationship.

**"Some Greeks... came to Philip... and said to him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.'" John 12:20-21**

Please share your response to this reflection to [Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](mailto:Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk) – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God' spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

**[www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](http://www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk)**