

May 15, 2016
John 14:15-24

First UMC, Waverly

Rev. Scott Shreve
“Seeing Jesus”

What have you been hoping to see in your life lately? This spring I had been looking forward to seeing the house that our son Daryl and Ashley purchased in Illinois. Daryl accepted a job offer at Illinois State University in March. He works in the field of Campus Recreation as the Assistant Director for Competitive Sports. The move meant that he concluded nearly four years of work at Boston College. Daryl and Ashley purchased a home in Bloomington, Illinois in March and they were able to move into it in April. They have only known dorm rooms and apartments in their adult lives so moving into their first home is very exciting. A couple of weeks ago we took a quick trip out to their place to give them a house warming gift of a dining-room table and chairs. The table was a perfect fit for their dining room. They were still settling in as they had painted the bedrooms and bathrooms upstairs and had those rooms looking great. They were working on the main floor when we arrived. They were still waiting for some living room furniture to be delivered which has since arrived. Daryl was working on his “Man Cave” in the basement as well. It was exciting to see their house which is now their home. It was cool to see my 30-year-old son mowing his backyard when we arrived. There are those moments in life when you recognize your child as a full-fledge adult. That was one of those moments, my son mowing his backyard, and it made me very proud.

What have you been hoping to see in your life recently? When I was a child I know that during this time of year I couldn't wait to see the last day of school. Any kids here who just can't wait to see the last day of school? (Any teachers?) When I was young the last day of school meant the beginning of many days of digging holes and making forts in empty lots in our sub-division that my brother and I claimed as our territorial domains. It meant going to the swimming pool most days and playing Little League baseball games. Between ages of 10 and 15 it meant golf most weekdays. Obviously my childhood days were pretty cushy. I remember loving to see the last day of school back then. Summertime meant relaxation, recreation, and carefree living. More often than not we like to see breaks for refreshment in our life, no matter what age we are.

What have you been hoping to see in your life? I know in my life I always like seeing a goal accomplished that looked overwhelming when I initially thought about it. That was certainly the case with the construction of our elevator here at the church. I remember getting the certificate of completion from our building contractor the third week in December of 2014. When I arrive in the summer of 2013 I remember seeing this chart posted on the door situated between and narthex and the hall to the education wing. It is the door I pass every time I walk out my office and took a left to the parlor, took a left to sanctuary, took a left to the stairs downstairs, took a left to walk home. That means I saw that chart dozens of times every day. I wondered if it was placed there by some clever committee for just that reason. When I arrived it read \$74,505 had been raised with a goal of about \$300,000. That weighted heavy on my mind for 18 months until that wonderful day in December, 2014 when we had the ribbon cutting for the elevator. That was a day that I was hoping to see. Now we have used the elevator for about 18 months and it was been a wonderful addition.

Another thing I had hoped to see is something you will see in my absence later this summer. We came up about \$15,000 short of the \$295,000 to build the elevator but the good news is that that debt along with the prior debt for the narthex addition that was built in 2003 will be completely paid off by Labor Day this year. I always look forward to being debt free in my personal and professional life.

What have you been hoping to see in your life? It might be stability, refreshment, and good family relationships or maybe you want to see increased personal finances, growing friendships, better health, or accomplishing a significant task in life. These are all significant aspects of life that most middle-Americans would like to see.

The question of faith in this regard is lifted up on our gospel lesson. In John 14:19 Jesus says “In a while the world will see me no more, but you will see me.”

What might we hope to see in our lives, maybe Jesus? What does it mean to see Jesus? I think it has more to do with the manner in which we live life than it does with the benchmarks experienced or goals we strive after.

Stability, refreshment, family togetherness, financial stability, close friendships, good health or the accomplishment of significant tasks can be the vision of an organized crime family as well as a Christian family. Therefore, I would suggest that the appearance of Christ in our life is more closely related to the process of reaching our goals than it is with the goals themselves. Certainly there are goals that are hurtful and even evil that would blind us to Christ but by and large it is the process and not the goal that enable us to perceive Christ in our midst.

I invite to join in a visualization exercise. Please close your eyes. Now, some of you have anticipated this part of the sermon and have already closed your eyes but for those of you who were not anticipating this part of the message please close your eyes as well. Now, I invite you visualize one thing that you would like to see come to pass in life. Give yourself a few seconds and visualize it happening....

Now, please open your eyes and think through this question for yourself. How might I see Jesus in the process of actualizing my vision? In other words, how is Jesus seen in the midst of our daily living and in our striving for our most sought-after goals in life?

In our gospel lesson Jesus shares with the disciples that he will be leaving them but they will be able to see him even after his physical departure. One of the disciples responds by basically saying "How does that work?" Jesus gave an answer to that in the previous chapter and gives a similar answer in chapter we are exploring.

Please remember the conversation Jesus had with the disciples in John 13 in the midst of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. Jesus says, "I, your Lord and teacher, have just washed your feet. You, then, should wash one another's feet. I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you." (John 13:14-15).

If we can see Jesus in our life by following his example then how do we "wash another's feet" in the midst of reaching our goals? One family shared with me that their "feet were washed" by the former owners of their home. The house they moved into was left totally clean by the family who sold it. Walking into a home that is "spic and span" is like having your "feet washed." In addition, they found a note from the previous homeowners wishing them well in their new home. That's having your "feet washed." The previous owners knew that the new family had two small children so placed alongside the note were age-appropriate toys for each child. That's having your "feet washed." I thought about that in our transition from the parsonage. What could I do for the Pastor Jeff and his wife Susan?

Hey, maybe install a brand new kitchen! That's happening right now. The cabinets were installed this past week and the counter tops are being installed this week. Brand new kitchen, that's pretty good! But I guess I can't really take any credit for that since it is being fully funded by the UMW and the "general contractor" is Sandy Blankenship with support from UMW members and the Trustees. I guess I can leave a nice note and a welcoming gift for Pastor Jeff and Susan on those new counter tops! We "wash the feet" of others as we go that extra mile of providing hospitality and Christ is present in the process.

As the disciples ask Jesus "...how can it be that you will reveal yourself to us..." Jesus responds by saying,

"Those who love me will obey my teachings.

My Father will love them, and my Father and I will come to them and live with them."

Are we loving toward others in the midst of pursuing our goals? If so, we will see Jesus in the process. Are we loving toward others in the midst of pursuing our goals? If not, we will not see Jesus in the process.

Does anyone know who this is? (show an picture of Steph Curry). That is Steph Curry, basketball player for the Golden State Warriors. Golden State won the NBA basketball championship last year. Steph was voted the MVP (most valuable player) of the NBA last year. This year Golden State set the record for most wins in a regular season with 73 wins and only 9 loses. This week Steph Curry was awarded the MVP for this season. Two years in a row. In addition, he was the first player to be unanimously elected. I watched his acceptance speech Tuesday afternoon. He gave credit to his coaches, trainers, and teammates. He gave credit to his family

and supportive network of friends. He gave credit to God for his natural talents. He is a very humble and gracious young man. He “washes the feet” of others as he acknowledges them and shares the credit for his accomplishments.

Another thing that caught my ear during his press conference was what the Sport Information Director for Golden State said after Steph concluded his remarks and the question and answer time was about to begin with the dozens of reporters present. The Sports Information Director noted that two weeks ago Steph received another reward voted on by the sports writers. It was for the NBA player who provided the most time and courtesy to sports writers for their interviews. Steph Curry won that as well. Are we loving towards others in the midst of pursuing our goals? If so, we will see Jesus in the process. Steph Curry is a great role model for being thoughtful and loving in the midst of pursuing one’s goals.

What have you been hoping to see? Do you hope to see Jesus in your daily interactions? “Washing the feet” of others and obeying his teachings will reveal the Christ presence in our midst. Amen.