

Lent V Psalm 51:4
Against you and you alone have we sinned.

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Against you and you alone have we sinned (Ps: 51:4)

Ultimately, the mission of God (*Missio Dei*) is “appointed (Hebrews 5:5 ESV)” to Jesus Christ as the God-Man; source of eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:10 ESV); Christ is the liberator who delivers ALL humans from the bondage of sin.

Jesus uses the analogy of a “grain of wheat” to describe his death. This Wheat (Jesus) falls, dies as the seed that leads to much fruit and gain the Kingdom of God for ALL types of wheat (*Jews and other immigrants of multiple colors, religion, race...*). He restores fallen humanity back to intimate connection with God by being the agent of reconciliation (Hebrews 5: 9, 10).

In the Gospel of John we learn that some Greeks came to “worship at the feast (John 12:20 ESV)” and wished “to see Jesus (John 12:21 ESV)”. These were Greeks who had been brought to a certain point by the grace of God. They had grown from a belief in many gods, the normal Greek belief of the time, to share with the Jews the belief in ONE God known in the four letter Tetragrammaton as YHWH (Jehovah). Please note, both Jews and Greeks gathered to “worship at the feast” and “wished to see Jesus”. After this happened, Jesus says, “the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified (John 12:23 ESV)”. The end result? Greeks “wish to see Jesus!” Jesus the “grain of Wheat” is letting them ALL know, Jew or Greek, that He is the only “appointed” source for ALL God’s Children “to bear fruit”. He urges ALL of them to serve Him (John 12:26) and through Him ONLY God Almighty (YHWH) can be reached, but by NO other means! He assures whoever serves Him “the Father will honor him”.

Contextualizing this passage to our own Atlantic District:

Between 1906-2006, how many of our district’s congregations closed down their churches, schools or the individuals moved out to suburbs in a comfort zone in migration from the five boroughs? The major presenting reason was to avoid the influx of ‘new immigrant aliens’ such as African Americans, African Immigrants, Asians, Hispanics, Caribbeans etc. Instead of sharing with them our faith, time and space we left them, sometimes selling the property. Lord, help us to be interlocutors like Philip and Andrew who brought those Greeks to see you (John12: 21-23)! Against You and You alone have we sinned.

How many times on the run from those who are different have we abused the Lord’s church, time and money in the congregations of our district by remaining exclusive and aloof, failing to lift high the Cross of Christ? Lord, against you and you alone have we sinned.

How many times we have we on all sides played the /inferior/superior game with color, culture, immigration status, speaking accent, rather than celebrating our unity as God’s children and creation? Lord, forgive us, against you and you alone have we sinned.

Help us to be bold like the Greeks at the Worship Feast to face new challenges in “faithfully seeking the presence of God.”

As individuals, congregations and as the Atlantic District we come to the Lord with confidence. We CAN bear fruit. We can be a light to the nations. For the One who is the Dying Seed can give us ALL life!

-E. Johnson Rethinasamy