

## The Magnetism of Christ

Texts: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51; John 12:20-33

By Bass Mitchell

Manor Memorial UMC, New Market, VA

### Bible Readings:

Jeremiah 31:31-34 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

A New Covenant

31 The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

\*\*\*\*\*

Psalm 51 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Psalm 51

Prayer for Cleansing and Pardon

To the leader. A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions.
- 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.
- 4 Against you, you alone, have I sinned,  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you are justified in your sentence  
and blameless when you pass judgment.
- 5 Indeed, I was born guilty,  
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
- 6 You desire truth in the inward being;<sup>[a]</sup>  
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
- 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- 8 Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
- 9 Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my iniquities.
- 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right<sup>[b]</sup> spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing[c] spirit.

13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
and sinners will return to you.

14 Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,  
O God of my salvation,  
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

15 O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth will declare your praise.

16 For you have no delight in sacrifice;  
if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.

17 The sacrifice acceptable to God[d] is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

18 Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;  
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,

19 then you will delight in right sacrifices,  
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;  
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

\*\*\*\*\*

John 12:20-33 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)  
Some Greeks Wish to See Jesus

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. 21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. 23 Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

Jesus Speaks about His Death

27 "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." 29 The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." 30 Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people[a] to myself." 33 He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

\*\*\*\*\*

I have always been fascinated by magnets. There is some wondrous, mysterious force created by magnets that draws things to it. I do not understand this force. I have read that somehow it makes an electrical current and creates a magnetic field that then draws metal to it.

I remember learning about them in school. I did an experiment. We had lots of little particles of iron in a jar of sand. Trying to pick each of them out by hand with some tiny tweezers would have taken forever. So guess what I did? That's right. I used a magnet. And when I held the magnet up over the sand, what happened? Hundreds, thousands of those tiny iron particles came wiggling through the sand and stuck to that magnet!



“When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to me” (John 12:32)

I could not help but think about this when I read these words of Jesus:

*“When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to me” (John 12:32)*

There was something magnetic about Jesus! Even from his birth, he was attracting, drawing people from all walks of life -

from lowly shepherds to the learned magi;

from the elderly in the Temple (Simeon and Anna) to little children;

from tax collectors to fisherman;

from women like Martha to women of the night;

from a Pharisee who comes in the night like Nicodemus to one who would destroy Christians at first (Saul);

from people of all nations like at Pentecost.

Even today he is still drawing persons to him from all over the world.

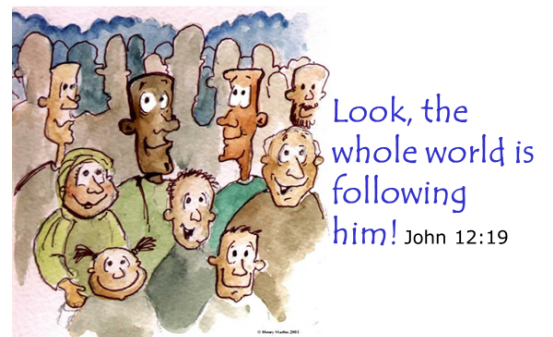
When he was lifted up on the cross, his arms stretched out, a powerful drawing force was let loose in the world. It is a magnetism so powerful that it spans time to reach out and draw people in every generation.

Wherever, whenever Christ is lifted up, he will draw people to himself! Just as he has drawn us together in this place this day...and the countless others across the world gathered in places like this...drawn together by the magnetism of Christ!

Even the religious leaders of his day recognized this in Jesus. John 12:19 - last part of the verse says:

*“...Look, the whole world is following him!” (Today's English Version)*

And look at verse 21. Some Greeks, Gentiles, are drawn to Jesus. To Philip, one of Jesus disciples, they ask, “*Sir, we want to see Jesus.*” Here is foreshadowed what it to come - that Jesus, lifted up on the cross, exalted by the resurrection and ascension, would be lifted up by Paul, Peter, and countless others so that the Gentiles would be drawn to Christ and into



God's kingdom! Those Greeks are you and me! They were the first outsiders of countless millions to be drawn to Christ.

There is something magnetic about this One lifted up...something very hard to resist...something that draws us to him...that makes us, like the Greeks, want to come and see what he's all about.

I have had vigorous discussions arguments with people about lots of things in relation to religion and the church. Many of them profess little if any religious faith and most do not go to church. But when the topic came around to Christ, they often showed a sense of reverence and admiration.

George Bernard Shaw, who claimed no religious faith whatsoever, and was condemned to hell by many a Christian, once wrote:

*"I am no more a Christian than Pilate was...gentle hearer; and yet, like Pilate, I greatly prefer Jesus of Nazareth to Annas or Caiaphas; and I am ready to admit that I see no way out of the world's misery but the way which would have been found by his will."*

Even the writer H.G Wells says of Jesus, *"Is it any wonder that to this day this Galilean is too much for our small hearts?"* (from Outline of History).

There is something magnetic about Christ...that reaches out...that grabs hold of us...that does not want to let us go...

A friend shared with me a conversation she had with her twenty-year old son. He said to her, *"I keep trying to be an atheist, but Jesus keeps DRAWING me back!"*

A Japanese student once said much the same thing: *"The strange thing about Jesus is that you can never get away from him."*

There is something about Jesus...something magnetic that draws us to him...that will not let us go...

And I will tell you what it is to me. This mysterious, magnetic force flowing from the lifted up Christ is the very presence and love of God!

All those who, like the Psalmist (Psalm 51) know the truth about their own sin, guilt, their broken relationship with God, are attracted to Jesus - for God's there!

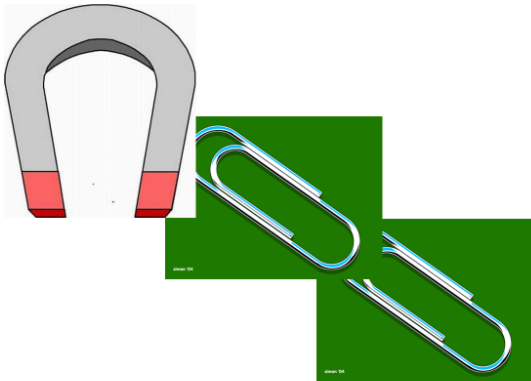
Those longing, like the psalmist, for a clean heart and hands will be attracted to Jesus - for the cleansing grace of God is there!

Those who, like Jeremiah (31:31ff), long for a new heart, a new covenant, a new and intimate relationship with God will find themselves drawn to Jesus - for Jesus is the fulfillment of that promise.

A nurse friend of mine told me once about a man in the hospital who knew she was a Christian. She said to him one day, *"Is there anything you need?"* He startled her by saying, *"Yes, I need God."*

Deep down, that is the greatest need we all share. And those brave and honest enough to admit it, will inevitably find themselves drawn to Jesus.

I do not wish to be narrow-minded. I believe there is truth in other religions and in other religious figures (past and present) - many of whom I have studied and respect. But I have never met anyone in and through whom I experienced the presence and love of God more than Jesus. I keep being drawn back to Jesus.



You know, it's a funny thing about a magnet. As long as a piece of metal, like this paper clip, is attached to it, the paper clip itself becomes a magnet. (And some metals, if attached to magnetic forces long enough, become magnetized themselves - permanently.)

So what do you think will happen when this magnet that's attached to this paper clip comes into contact with another paper clip?

That's right. If the magnet is strong enough, that paper clip will become a magnet and draw, attract to others, until you

have a long stream of paper clips!

In our text today, seems to me that Philip and Andrew were like that. Greeks came to them (okay, maybe it was that they had Greek names). But I think that it was because Philip and Andrew were themselves drawn and attached to Jesus, and they in turn, like paper clips to a magnet, attracted these Gentiles to the real Magnet - Jesus.

If only that could be said of you and me, that we so lift up Jesus in our lives, that we are so close to him, that others are drawn to him through us.

Are we helping draw others to Christ or repelling them?

Gandhi, the great spiritual leader from India, once said that he admired Christ very much. It was Christians he found it difficult to accept! That's something to think about, isn't it?

Alexander Nunn wrote: *"If Christ comes to rule in the hearts of people, it will be because we take him with us on the tractor, behind the desk, when we're making a sale to a customer, or when we're driving on the road"* (Houston, Texas, Times, All-Church Press).

There is an important message here for all of us.

For us Christians it is to let go of those things we are holding on to that may be keeping us from being drawn closer to Christ. We are his paper clips. Christ wants to draw others to him through us. That can only happen when we stay close to him ourselves (like a paper clip to a magnet.)

Haven't you sensed him drawing you closer? What's stopping you? What's coming between the magnet and the paper clip? What's keeping you from being closer to Christ? Time to name it, confess it, and get it out of the way.

And the message to all others is this - try as you may, you cannot get away from the magnetism of Jesus - for through him flows the greatest force this world has ever seen - the very love of God! Maybe you have resisted. You have held on tight and just won't let go. It's time to let go and give in to this wondrous



Philip & Andrew

magnetism of the One lifted up on a cross for you. If you have never done that, why not right now? Bow your head and pray this:

“Lord, I feel you drawing me to yourself. For so long I have resisted. Now, I am letting go. Bring me closer and closer to you. And draw out from my heart and mind all my sin, my guilt, my fears, and anything that would keep me from being ever closer to you. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus. I am yours. And use me to draw others to you. Amen.”