

32963 article 12-25-09

**Rev. Drs. Casey Baggott and Robert Baggott
Community Church of Vero Beach**

Seeing Jesus

We're told there is a little plaque attached to the top of the pulpit in the Chapel of Columbia Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia. It's located right where the preacher's notes would sit. The plaque says, "We wish to see Jesus." That line actually comes from John's Gospel, where it is spoken by foreigners who have traveled some distance, we assume, to look Jesus up. "We wish to see Jesus," they say to the disciples, hoping for an audience. But we're not told if they ever get one. Of course, in Columbia's chapel, the plaque holding this verse is a reminder to the preacher that it is his or her job to be certain that whoever comes seeking Jesus in that place and on that day won't go away disappointed.

It's an age old quest, isn't it – this desire to see Jesus? Apparently we're still looking and still trying to help one another spot him yet today. Perhaps that is why the book and movie, *The Da Vinci Code*, by Dan Brown generated such massive and varied responses a few years ago when it first appeared. Actually, Brown simply highlighted a question that has existed for many hundreds of years... namely, is the portrait of Jesus we see in our Bible the fullest image we can hope for – or are there other writings which could shed even more light on his life and character? The so-called Gnostic Gospels (written two to four hundred years after Christ, but rejected from the Bible) claim to have secret knowledge about Jesus, and they therefore raise the question of whether we really know all there is to know about just who Jesus was. Is the way we have seen Jesus across the years a distortion of reality? Scholars have weighed in on various aspects of this question, some angry at the challenge to more orthodox teachings of the church, some seemingly pleased that a "teachable moment" is occurring, when evidence for and against the truthfulness of various writings about Jesus can be discussed.

We think the attention to this matter is justifiable. After all, we of the church gather each week in the spirit of the one who described himself in such mysterious images as the bread of life, the light of the world, the good shepherd, and the true vine. All those descriptions help us to see Jesus in more than human terms. They are images that leave us expectant, hopeful, breathless with awe, and as determined as his followers of old. Like them, "we wish to see Jesus." We shouldn't be content until we've found him. Anything that encourages Christians to sort out fact from fiction in the seeking of Jesus is a help to us. And, as we remember Jesus' words ... when we seek, we shall find.