

Second Sunday after Epiphany— January 15, 2023

John 1:29-42

*29The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’ 31I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.” 32And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 33I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ 34And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.” 35The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, 36and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” 37The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” 39He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon. 40One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. 41He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed). 42He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).*

SERMON....What are you looking for?

Jesus' very first words in John's Gospel arrive as a question: *What do you seek?* Jesus notices two of John's students traipsing along behind him and he turns on his heel to ask them what they're looking for.

They ask Jesus where he is staying. Nope, they're not asking for Jesus' contact information. They mean, "what do you teach—what kind of a person are you—what sort of life do you lead?" When people followed a rabbi or a travelling philosopher, the dialogues were a small part of the following. Being a disciple meant imitating the lifestyle of the teacher.

The word John chooses for the question where are you *staying* is related to our words for *remain*, or *maintain* or even to *abide*. The word foreshadows times Jesus would invite us to abide in him and instances where Jesus promises to abide in us. This is relationship language.

Jesus' honest, open-ended question lands square into our midst. What do we seek? I find myself treading carefully on holy ground where a glib reply won't do.

The philosopher and preacher's kid Soren Kierkegaard famously distinguished between those who admire Jesus and those who follow him. So it makes sense to deliberate when we're asked "*What do we seek?*" Where might we hesitate in our response?

What if what we want something like, wealth, political power, or a trouble free life only to learn that these aren't things Jesus offers?

What if our request proves inadequate—not wrong—just inadequate? If we want easy answers or slogans to live by, what would we miss if our request is short sighted? Frequently Jesus' followers would ask a question only to have Jesus answer with more questions. Blessedly, most often Jesus bypassed the questions and answers to offer to his followers a relationship in which to abide. Jesus offers himself.

What we seek as the Lord's Prayer puts it, 'thy Kingdom come, thy will be done'? How prepared are we to have our lives transformed when we give voice to what we seek?

Who knows if John's followers had an inkling of what they were in for when they tagged along behind Jesus or when after being asked, "What do you seek" they replied, "Where are you staying?" Who knows if we know what we're in for.

Nevertheless, Jesus says, "*come and see*".

I was curious about what these disciples see Jesus do when they first started hanging out with him.

They went to a wedding. Wine ran out. Then from jars of water came an abundance of wine that even impressed the wine steward. It was a sign, John says. Water changed to wine was a sign of God's abundance, taking a gift like water and transforming it into something even more amazing. God's abundance, signified in wine was something the disciples tasted and they felt its warmth suffuse their bodies as they drank.

What will we witness when Jesus waves us ahead to come and see? What stories will we tell others about the ways God has shown up in the world and in our lives?

We share the faith, love our neighbours, and invite others to worship, learn and serve, May we hear echoes from those who reported to their friends, "We have found the Messiah...the chosen"...or as Mary Madelene testified after encountering the risen Christ when she says, "I have seen the Lord"