

1.15.2023 Epiphany 2

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Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-11; 1 Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-42

“Come and see”

*Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

In today’s gospel, as Andrew and the other disciple started to follow Jesus, Jesus turned and asked them a question, “*What are you looking for?*” It’s a disarming question that perhaps made them think, “Well, what *am* I looking for?” Like a polished arrow, Jesus points the question at each of us as we also seek to follow him: “*What are you looking for?*”

Apparently caught off guard, Andrew and other disciple did not answer Jesus’ question, instead they asked, “*Where are you staying?*” Jesus invited them, saying, “*Come and see.*” Spending the better part of the day with Jesus, their experience with him must have been profound. At four o’clock that day Andrew sought out his brother Simon, saying with a sense of urgency, “*We have found the Messiah.*” Andrew brought his brother to Jesus.

The words “*Come and see*” are not only an invitation to spend time with Jesus; these words are also a call to follow him. These words should guide everything about our mission and ministry as Christians. “*Come and see*” are words that should be over the entrance as well as the exit of every church everywhere. These words invite us into Jesus’ presence and they also ask us to invite others, saying, “*Come and see.*”

Like Jesus and Andrew, we are to say “*Come and see*” to our sisters and brothers, our friends and acquaintances. The words “*Come and see*” are the briefest and most powerful mission plan ever spoken because they make us depend, not upon our own strength, our culture, our language, our persuasiveness, or our wealth, but solely upon the living Christ Jesus.

Yet the church has not always spoken these words of Jesus; the church has not always invited people, saying, “*Come and see.*” We must never forget that the church also participated in imperialism and colonialism, resulting in the enslavement of indigenous people throughout the world. If this makes you feel uncomfortable, it should, because it reminds us why many people in this world want nothing to do with the church or with religion in general. The church, instead of saying, “*Come and see,*” cooperated with nations saying, “Conquer and divide.” This very uncomfortable fact of Christian history has robbed many people of their voices and their freedom to freely come and see Jesus the Christ.

Today’s text from the prophet Isaiah reads that the servant of the Lord, Israel, will be “*a light to*

*the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.*” As we think about the themes of Epiphany and God’s mission to the ends of the earth, and of Christ as a light to the nations, we also mourn the church’s lost opportunities in saying to peoples and nations, “*Come and see.*”

The prophet Isaiah speaks of God’s word as a “*a sharp sword*” and “*a polished arrow.*” God’s word has the power make feel uncomfortable, piercing us as we die to ourselves and this world, and raising us to new life with Christ. Isaiah spoke of this, writing, “*He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away.*” When Jesus says, “*What are you looking for?*” and “*Come and see,*” Jesus’ words are as sharp as a sword and as polished as an arrow. Jesus’ words unmask us so that he might encounter us as we truly are, and we might also realize, with Jesus, who we are.

You probably know the phrase “put on your Sunday best,” meaning when we come to church, we dress, act and speak in ways that we usually do not. I am sure that Andrew and the other disciple didn’t first ask Jesus to wait as they went home to put on their “Sabbath best” before going to spend time with Jesus. Jesus’ question, “*What are you looking for?*” went beyond the small talk of introducing himself. With confidence, Jesus answered his own question, saying, “*Come and see.*”

This brief conversation with Andrew and the other disciple reminds me of Jesus’ conversation with the woman at the well, which is more fully developed three chapters later in John. After her experience with Jesus at the well, the woman went into the city and told others, “*Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?*” This woman, like Andrew calling his brother Simon, was saying to her community, “*Come and see.*” Jesus’ question and invitation are like a sharp sword and a polished arrow going straight to our hearts, and inviting our response.

When Andrew brought Simon to Jesus, Simon could simply not have known that Jesus would call him “*Cephas*” meaning “*Petros*,” or “rock.” Simon Peter could not have known he would be the rock upon whom Jesus Christ would build his church. In Simon Peter, Jesus saw what he was looking for. This is what Jesus does with us. Jesus unmask us; Jesus revealing our true selves with words that pierce our hearts and minds like a polished arrow, allowing us to grow into our true selves and into our true potential. “*Come and see*” the man who will tell you who you are and who you might become if you follow him.

Today is the church commemoration of the American Christian and prophet, Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King’s words to America and the world were like a sharp sword and a polished arrow,

striking at the heart of who we think we are, revealing us for what we are – sinful people in need of Jesus.

Like the prophets before him, Dr. King's words made people uncomfortable. Like Jesus' words, "*Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so people persecuted the prophets before you*" (Mt. 5:12), Dr. King was martyred because he dared to speak as a prophet for Jesus, standing with black Americans, all people of color and the poor. Dr. King was murdered in an attempt to silence the sharp sword and polished arrow of God's word alive in this world.

Andrew and Simon Peter, church tradition tells us, were killed because they followed Jesus, saying, "*Come and see.*" The world will always resist Jesus, but to follow Jesus is to follow the light of the world. Through you, Jesus will illuminate the darkness of this world for others.

Like Andrew and Peter, the woman at the well, like Dr. King and countless others saints who have heard and followed Jesus – Jesus also comes to you today, saying, "*What are you looking for?*" – "*Come and see.*" How will you respond? Will you respond in the words of today's psalm, Psalm 40: "*Here I am... I love to do your will. O my God.*"

Jesus is a light to the nations; his word is a sharp sword and a polished arrow. Jesus will tell you everything about yourself. Jesus came to stand with the poor, the weak, the outcast, the sinner – with you and with me in our darkness, giving us his light in this world.

"*Come and see.*" Stand in his light. His words will make you fearless in this world. He will also make you into "*Petros*" – a rock of faith for others.

"*Come and see.*" How will you respond to Jesus' call again this year? Like the saints and prophets, may we say: "*Here I am; I love to do your will.*" Amen.