

Sermon

Sunday, January 19, 2020

Preacher: Rev. David Martin, Deacon

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

John 1:29-42

Theme: Come and See

What are you looking for?

Seriously. What are you looking for?

I suspect there are very few of us here today who just blithely stumble through life not seeking anything more than what it takes to get from day to day.

What are YOU looking for?

Jesus asks this question of his soon-to-be disciples in today's Gospel. I'll bet Jesus has the same question for us.

What are you looking for?

As we ponder that question, let's examine today's Gospel

We just heard that John the Baptist sees Jesus and proclaims to everyone around him that this man, Jesus, is indeed the Messiah. This is the person he has been predicting would come.

On the next day, John the Baptist is hanging out with two of his own followers. Once again they see Jesus and John the Baptist points out yet again that Jesus is the one they have all been waiting for. He calls Jesus "the Lamb of God." One of these people is Andrew and we can safely guess the other one is John, the beloved disciples who is mentioned often in the Gospel.

Andrew and John are so taken by what John the Baptist has told them they physically follow Jesus....perhaps walking behind him at a safe distance. Jesus realizes he's got a couple of stalkers – maybe too shy or unsure of what they should say – so Jesus ask them that question:

What are you looking for?

Andrew and John refer to Jesus as a "teacher" and ask him where he is staying. C'mon, dudes. Is that really what you're looking for? Jesus' address? I highly doubt it. And Jesus suspects they have a much deeper longing.

So, Jesus responds with the most tempting of answers: “Where am I staying? [...] Come and see.”

Come and see.

We hear that it is about 4:00 in the afternoon and that Andrew and John spend the rest of the day with Jesus.

Later, perhaps yet a third day, Andrew tells his brother – who turns out to be Peter – that he has met Jesus, the Messiah, and Peter should come meet him as well. Jesus now has three new followers.....friends.....disciples.

So, when Jesus asked them what they were looking for? What do you think their actual answer should have been? What were Andrew and John really looking for? They said they wanted to know where Jesus was staying.

OK, but why? Because they wanted to hang out with Jesus

OK, but why? Because they were looking for the Messiah.

OK, but why? Because they had been told by prophets and John the Baptist that this person was coming to save the world.

OK, but why were they interested in that? Maybe they were looking for salvation. Maybe they knew there was a better way than their current lives. Maybe they were seeking direction and guidance.

I am fascinated by what Jesus tells his new friends when they sidestep that difficult question.

They call Jesus “rabbi” or “teacher.” Jesus could have easily followed their lead. Jesus could have said “Yes. I am your teacher. And here’s what I want you to do.”

Because there are lots of times in the Gospel of John that Jesus tells his disciples exactly who he is.

I am the bread of life.

I am the light of the world.

I am the door.

I am the good shepherd.
I am the resurrection and the life.
I am the way and the truth and the life.
I am the true vine.

But when first meeting his new followers, Jesus doesn't explicitly tell them anything. Instead Jesus invited them to "come and see." Check it out for yourself

Jesus invites them into deeper relationship. Jesus suggests they "come and see."

So...have you thought about your answer to Jesus' question? If Jesus came up to you right now...if Jesus walked down the aisle and pointed to you sitting that pew and asked "what are you looking for?".....what would you tell him?

I know it's a hard question. It's deeply personal and, in all likelihood, an incredibly painful question.

Breaking a cardinal rule of giving a sermon, I'm going to tell my story of what I have looking for.

At a very young age I knew I was different. Back then I didn't know what that difference was. I didn't have a name or a definition for it. But I knew that if anyone ever found out about that difference, I would not be loved. I would not be accepted.

And like many little children who have shared this same difference with me we prayed that God would make us NOT different. That God would make us not gay or lesbian or bi-sexual or transgender or queer.

What was I looking for? I was looking to be like everyone else.

But God's answer wasn't to change me. God sent Jesus to say to me "come and see."

That's the wonder of Jesus' invitation. When decide you will "come and see" you might very well find something even more beautiful than you thought you were looking for.

That "come and see" journey wasn't easy. For me it took questioning. It involved stating my truth – "coming out" - and living my authentic existence. It had me talking to family and friends about who I really am. It took a lot of searching for kind and loving and accepting congregations and parishes. It took years of acknowledging my self-worth. For me, it took years of ignoring God's call for me to not only accept and love myself but to help others along that same path.

And now...here I stand telling you that Jesus wants to know what you're looking for. And that no matter what it is, Jesus is inviting you to "come and see." There are no easy answers. There is no treasure map to follow that will lead you to what you seek. But there is a loving God who sent Jesus to tell us all that we are all worthy of finding it....whatever IT is.

Maybe you are looking for forgiveness for something you regret....forgiveness from someone you treated poorly....for some pain you have caused.

Jesus invites you to "come and see."

Perhaps you are looking for reconciliation with someone from whom you are estranged.

Jesus invites you to "come and see."

Perhaps you are looking for healing from something which has wounded you deeply....someone who has hurt you beyond what any of us can imagine.....from self-inflicted judgment.

Jesus invites you to "come and see."

Maybe you are depressed and are looking for help in getting through it....or the source of your depression.

Jesus invites you to "come and see."

Perhaps you are looking for direction. You are at a transition point – entering a new school or the work force for the first time or a new career. Maybe you are transitioning from being actively involved in work to retirement....or are facing an empty nest....or starting a new relationship...or ending an old one. Life is full of transitions that require guidance.

Jesus invites you to "come and see."

And then there is the affliction of simply not knowing what you are looking for. You feel lethargic and know you can be so much more than you currently are but you don't know how to make that happen.

Jesus invites you to "come and see."

I believe that Jesus is inviting us into communion with God, with him, and with one another. Come and see is an invitation to join a community of people who will help one another in searching....who will take the sacrifice of Jesus and use it to make themselves and each other

realize we are all forgiven....and perfect....and able to overcome the problems holding us back from being the best loving person we are all created to be.

Jesus did not say “I am the magic elixir which will solve all your problems.” Jesus instead said “come and see”....join me on a journey of self-discovery....join with me in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.....

Essentially, after asking us what we’re looking for, Jesus says why don’t you hang out at my place and get to know other people who are also looking for something – other people who are searching. We’ll all work on our searches together. Jesus tells us he’s got lots of helpful tips on how to find what you’re looking for. And best of all we can support one another while we’re on the journey of finding what we are looking for.

Jesus says that he is with us.

Jesus invites us to come and see.

Come and see.

Come and see.