



Epiphany 2, Year A – January 16, 2011

John 1.29-42

A Homily preached by the Rev'd Tara Livingston

I love the Gospel of John. It is from this text that we get some of our most beloved imagery about the Messiah called Jesus. John introduces us to Jesus as “the word”, as “the living water” and “the way, the truth and the light”. These phrases are deeply ingrained in our psyche as faithful Christians because we cannot help but be moved by the beauty of the language.

The Gospel of John was written much later than the Synoptic gospels, so called because they share a common narrative theme. By the time that this Gospel was written John presents a higher Christology than the synoptics, describing Jesus as the incarnation of the divine Logos through whom all things were made, as the object of veneration, and (according to some scholars) more explicitly as God incarnate. Only in John does Jesus talk at length about himself and his divine role, often shared with the disciples only. Against the synoptics, John focuses largely on different miracles (including resurrecting Lazarus), given as signs meant to engender faith. Synoptic elements such as parables and exorcisms are not found in John. It presents a realized eschatology in which salvation is already present for the believer.

The audience for whom it was written were no longer Jewish believers but had become a unique and distinct religion. But it is apparent that the author of this Gospel knows that there is more to be done to reassure Jesus' followers and inspire them to continue to spread the good news.

In the reading we heard this morning, a few short versus, we heard about John the Baptists declaration about Jesus' identity, his baptism and the decision of Andrew and Peter to follow Jesus. It is rich with imagery and possibilities for preaching. But I'd like to introduce you to a theme that you will hear throughout the Gospel of John that begins with today's reading.

“Come and see”.

It is a simple invitation that will be repeated again and again to those new Christians long ago and is offered to us again today. “Come and see”. We are asked to become disciple of Jesus just as Andrew and Peter were asked long ago. And when we say yes it might go something like this. We will be expected to work harder than we ever imagined, to give more than we thought possible, and to surrender our stubborn need for control to serve the divine will.

And what do we get in return?

Nothing. At least nothing that would be considered of any value in today's world. What we receive is more work, more need requiring us to give, and more and more opportunities to surrender. That's because the gift of God's grace is free and offered to everyone without condition. There's nothing anyone can do to earn it, deserve it, or be excluded from it.

So why be a disciple?

Come and see.

Come and immerse yourself in the mystery of faith so that you might realize it's significance. The world tells us that to receive something, something must first be given and to give something we should expect something in return. This is not what we are being offered. There is no transaction to be made. And yet we are called.

Come and see.

We are all invited to heed the call to come and see. We are called to enter into relationship with Jesus, with God, and to give all we have for the chance to do so. Over the next weeks as we listen to the Gospel of John hear the phrase "come and see" and remember that that is an invitation to walk with our Lord just as it was to those who first heard it long ago. Salvation has already been offered and received by those who believe.

Come and see.

Thanks be to God.