

Sermon for Epiphany 2A

The Text: John 1:29-42

Brought to Christ

If you were told there is a treasure chest buried in the sand of a beach on the west side of an island, and if you find it you can have it, would you sign up?

It is the same with God. We can search for God in a hundred different ways, and go through all kinds of odd and even dangerous experiences and never find Him. In fact, those who search for God, not knowing who He is, usually never find Him. They endlessly chase after false gods. What those searching for God need is someone who knows God to bring them to Him.

The reality is that we find God when He finds us. We find God when He speaks to us. His voice usually comes from a family member or friend who tells us about Jesus. Someone who knows the love of God, who has been changed by His compassion and grace. One whom God has made His very own, and they want others to know Him also. In most cases it is believers who bring their children, their family, and their friends to Jesus to hear Him speak with truth and with power.

That's the pattern we see in the Bible. A Jewish servant girl tells Naaman about the prophet of the Lord who could heal him, and he was cleansed of his skin disease (2 Kings 5). Four friends carry their crippled mate on a mattress to Jesus, and he was cured and made whole (Mk 2:1-12). Philip speaks with the Ethiopian about Jesus, and he was baptised (Acts 8:26-39). Believers bring those needing God's grace to Jesus, and He heals, and raises up and gives life.

The Gospel reading for today tells a similar story. One day John the Baptist was standing with two of his disciples and Jesus walks by. John points out the Messiah to them saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" John brought them to Jesus by showing them who Jesus is and immediately they left John and became disciples of Christ.

This was not the first time they had heard of Jesus. John's ministry was to reveal Christ to the nation of Israel. The willingness of John's disciples to leave him and follow Jesus shows how well he did his work. Having heard of Christ's coming they believed in Him who they had not seen, and at the first opportunity they leave everything to follow Him.

Christ turned to His new disciples and asked them what they were seeking. What they were searching for was the Messiah, and the opportunity to sit at the great Teacher's feet, and learn more about the kingdom of God. They didn't just want to know who Jesus is, they want to know all about Him, and how He was going to fulfil the

Scriptures and bring God's promises to fulfilment. They were hungry to hear His words. If He is the Son of God and Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, then they want Him to take away their sins and give them His life.

Jesus invites them saying, "Come and you will see." Has a greater invitation ever been given? Jesus grants an open invitation to join Him, to stay with Him and learn from Him. This is the best "access all areas" invitation ever issued. And so, the two disciples left John and followed Jesus.

The day was late, about 4pm, and the two men should have gone home, but they cannot stop listening to Jesus. They soak up His every word, until late in the evening and probably stayed the night with Him. After hearing Christ's words of life and grace, one of the disciples, Andrew, raced out early the next morning to tell his brother about Jesus. Andrew wants his brother to know that the One they had been searching for, has come to them and invited them to stay with Him. He says to his brother, "We have found the Messiah"... and He brought [his brother] to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).

An encounter with Jesus is life changing. For John the Baptist it meant the Son of God had descended and taken on human flesh to be the sacrifice for all sins. For Andrew, meeting Christ meant the long-promised Messiah had come. For Simon it meant a change of name and a change of life direction.

Jesus' three new disciples – Andrew, Peter and the third is probably John the Gospel writer – did not find God by their own efforts, they were brought to Him by those who knew Him. Before they met Jesus, they had heard His words from the lips of a close friend that prepared their hearts to meet Him, and trust in Him as their Lord and Saviour.

Many of us come to know Jesus through our parents. We hear the words of the Bible and their prayers, even in the womb. Then they bring us to the place where He is found, where His Word works with power. They bring us to Baptism to meet with Jesus and hear His gracious words.

Children are brought to Jesus because Christian parents know that no matter how cute their baby is, every child is born a sinner. They know that without bringing their child to God they will never find Him on their own. The sinful nature we are born with, sometimes called the Old Adam, leads us away from God. The Old Adam rejects God and leads us away from His love and into sin and on to death.

Godly parents know the little ones God has blessed them with will one day die and have to stand before the judgement seat of God, and no matter how good they have lived their life, they will never have God's approval without the forgiveness and pardon of Jesus upon them.

The psalm for today describes the life of the sinner without God as, a miry bog, a pit of destruction, from which we cannot escape (Ps 40:2). But we have a rescuer who has

drawn us up from the pit of sin, death and hell, and set out feet upon a rock (Ps 40:2). Our rescuer is Jesus. He bled to save us. The forgiveness He won on the cross is what God gives in Baptism. Christ's perfect righteousness is placed on us as a gift.

This is why Christ commands us all, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 19:14).

We encounter Jesus in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism through water and His Word. Christ speaks to forgive sins, to cleanse sinners, to grant His Holy Spirit, to make us holy and alive in Him, to adopt us into God's family and grant us the certain promise of salvation.

In Baptism, you were born again a child of God. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come (2 Cor 5:17). Your identity and your life is found in Christ. You are now disciples of Jesus, followers of Him who has overcome sin by His dying and defeated death by rising on the third day. You confess the name of the true God in whose name you were baptised into: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Our Triune God gives us peace that lasts even in the hardest of times. Only Christ on the cross takes away your sin and guilt. Only Christ raised from the dead to never die again gives us hope for the future. Real joy is found in knowing that Christ went through death to win salvation for you, and He gives it to us as a free gift. No charge or payment required. Simply trust in Him who you have been brought to and who has shown Himself to be our Rock, your life and our salvation.

John the Baptist came to reveal Christ and His salvation to Israel. John told two of his disciples about Jesus and they became His disciples. One of those disciples was Andrew, who brought his brother Simon Peter to Jesus. And so, through human history we see the Church grow by believers bringing others to Jesus, by inviting them to come and meet the Saviour. The best evangelism happens one on one when a child of God shares the joy they have from knowing God's grace and compassion in Christ, with those who seek His blessings.

I want to leave you with a couple of question to ponder. 1) Who, among those you have brought to Jesus can you encourage in their faith walk this week? And who can you bring to Jesus in prayer, as well as in your loving words and actions, so they can one day meet their Saviour and Lord?

Even before saying a word about the love God has for all people, we can bring others to Jesus in prayer. This prepares us to speak the Gospel to them and prepares their heart to trust in Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Amen

Let's pray. Gracious Father, You have poured into our hearts the true Light of the World. Grant that the light of Christ would shine forth from our lives into the lives of those around us, that they too may know Your saving love. Amen.

The peace of God that passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.