



St. Andrew's By-the-Sea
The Episcopal Church
in Destin, Florida

DO WE WANT TO BE FOUND?
JANUARY 15, 2023

A Homily by the Rev. Jo P. Popham

John 1:29-42

God had told John the Baptist that he would know 'the one' by the spirit descending like a dove. And a dove descended on Jesus, 'the one', God's own, the Son of God. The dove identified our Lord Jesus as the Christ.. The very next day, John recognized Jesus as 'the one.' He told two of his own disciples: "Look, here is the Lamb of God." The two followed Jesus. When Jesus saw them he asked them: "What are you looking for?" And they called him Rabbi and asked Jesus "where are you staying?" Jesus told them to "Come and see." One of them was Andrew.

Where are you staying? We might think that Jesus was visiting at some else's home. And he had invited these two new followers to spend the night. I don't know about you, but if a friend was a guest in my home and he invited others to come and see, to join him in visiting at my home, I would be frantic picking up dog toys, fluffing the sofa pillows, checking that I had enough to feed two more hungry travelers, picking up laundry, and cleaning the bathrooms. Is that what the two men were asking when they said: "Where are you staying?" In the Greek the verb "to stay" meant much more than where was Jesus spending the night; it implied stability and permanence. Where Jesus was staying would then mean where do you abide; where will you remain; where do you endure, continue; where do you dwell? John's followers wanted to know where Jesus dwelt because they wanted to be where he was. It mattered not that they might have to share a pallet on the floor with the dogs and their toys. Andrew and the other man did not want to know the location of his tent, or the guest house he was visiting, they wanted to be with him, really be with him, so that he could be with them. They wanted to abide with him and him with them. They wanted to dwell with him. And they wanted Jesus to dwell with them. Always! "Come and see." 'Come and see for yourselves,' Jesus told them. And they came. And they remained with him; they stayed with him.

After being with Jesus, really being fully present with our Lord, Andrew went to his brother Simon and told him “We have found the Messiah,” the anointed one. Andrew brought his brother to get to know this Jesus. And Simon Peter became the rock on which the church was built.

So what are we looking for when we come to church? Why are we here? What have we come to see? Are we looking for ‘the one?’ Do we want to be with Jesus, to abide with him and he with us forever? Why are we here? Do we gather to learn about the Lamb of God? Do we run from our cars through blinding rain and wind to hear more about the teachings of the 1st century Rabbi who came to be the light of the world so that we can see better? Why do we come? Andrew was one of the two who had come to see, to investigate, to find out if Jesus was ‘the one.’ And he brought his brother Simon. John the baptizer spoke with authority. As a trusted prophet, his followers believed him. And when Andrew and another of John’s disciples met Jesus they knew who was speaking to them. And they wanted to remain with him.

What are we looking for? Jesus ask Andrew and the other disciple – and he is asking us – “what are you looking for?” Are we hoping for fulfillment in our lives? Are we looking for truth? Are we simply looking for bread and water to sustain us, like so many other people? Perhaps not, since most all of us seem to have the basic needs for survival, but we can surely identify with those who are looking for the basic needs of life. Are we looking for salvation? Do we look to Jesus for light and life – do we seek the way? Whatever our needs, whatever we long for, Jesus says “‘Come and see.’ I am it.’ I am what God knows you need. Jews hoped for the Messiah, ‘the one’ who knew what they were looking for. And the non-Jews to whom the Gospel of John was written were looking for the same things. All people had and have the same human longings. We all want God to dwell with us, to abide in us forever, do we not? Can we be like Andrew? Can we go and bring our brother, our friend, to see ‘the one?’

Jesus abides with the Christian community. And Jesus abides in us Christians. When we reach out to others to bring them to Christ, I think we need to be intentional but perhaps also cautious. The secular world may not know what we mean when we use our

churchy words, just as those to whom John wrote in the later half of the first century. His audience weren't Jews. They didn't know the messianic message of the Jewish scriptures. They didn't know that the world was waiting for God to come among us. Messiah who? they asked. So the author of John's Gospel had to explain who the Messiah was and is.

Andrew said "We have found 'the Messiah.'" Often we say that we have found Christ. Could that be interpreted to mean it is we who have accomplished this, rather than God. I wonder if we Christians are overstating our commitment by saying this. We have not really found God, found Jesus the Christ, "the one." It is not our doing, but rather God's action. Augustine's prayer is "We could not seek you, O Lord, if you had not already found us." But John's disciples knew his ministry, they knew that he spoke of one who was coming from God. They were expecting God to find them. They were praying to find "the one" who had already found them.

Do the people of the 21st century – do we – know that God has found us? If we did not know the story of God's creation, if we had known about John's baptizing and preparing the world for the arrival of 'the one' could we grasp the message of the Messiah?

Andrew said, "We have found the Messiah!" He and we have found him because he found us. Christ came to us. He came to us. He sought out John the baptizer and his followers. He found them, and he has found us. So if we say to our secular friends 'come and see,' come and see what we have found we are not wrong, but perhaps we are taking too much credit for our being saved. We have not saved ourselves. God is the one who has saved us. We are not saved through our own actions. We are saved by 'the one' who saves. And all people can be and are saved because God finds us.

So I ask myself – and we all should all ask ourselves – "What are we looking for?" What is it that we want from God – from Jesus?" Are we looking to be found by God – by Jesus? Yes, I think that is the question. Do we want to know where Jesus the Messiah is? Do we want to abide with him? Do we want to be found? Don't we all?

Lord, may it be so. Amen.