

May the words of my lips and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Strength, and our Redeemer. Amen

Last week, the theme was, ‘God is loose in the world, in the person of Jesus, and this is a great and marvelous thing’. Today, I wish to offer to you another theme. Here is what I believe is one theme that we can take from John’s gospel passage for today.

“Come and see, God is working in the world today, through all believers who share the Word of God about the power of the ministry of Jesus Christ, and His redeeming grace. It is in their witness that he invites others to come into His love and peace.” That is way more than a theme. It is a statement of faith, isn’t it?

In John, chapter three, verse sixteen we hear these words, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” John is telling us that God loves all creation and desires that every human being, and all nations, and all peoples will come to know God’s abiding love for us all. But how? How is this to come about? That’s my question for today.

To find an answer to this question, I believe we need to look at how God is revealing God’s own self, in the scriptures and in all creation, in Jesus’ time, and even today.

In the gospel reading appointed for this Second Sunday after Epiphany, we have moved from the gospel of Mark into John’s gospel and we hear the story of Jesus’ call to Philip and Nathanael, two of the first disciples. To fully understand what the scriptures are saying,

it might help to know something of what has transpired immediately before Jesus calls Philip.

Jesus has been baptized by John the Baptist in the river Jordan. And John has proclaimed Jesus as the one greater than himself. Two of John's followers are intrigued by Jesus and when Jesus asks them "what are you looking for", they heed his call to 'Come and see', come and see what Jesus is about to do. One of these new followers of Jesus, was Andrew, brother of Simon Peter. Andrew is so intrigued with Jesus that he goes and finds his brother Simon and in witness to Jesus, brings Simon to meet Jesus, inviting him to meet this amazing man and his growing community of followers.

The author of the Gospel attributed to John is not the only gospel writer to report on the call of the first disciples into this new community which Jesus is now gathering around himself as he begins his public ministry. Matthew 4:18-22 contains a similar story of the call of Simon Peter, his brother Andrew and then James and John, the sons of Zebedee. Mark 1:16-20 deals with the same group of disciples being called in a similar fashion. Luke's gospel does not deal with the calling of the disciples to be followers of Jesus. Instead, we meet Simon Peter at his home where Jesus heals his mother-in-law and later heals many sick people. Jesus goes out from that house to the water's edge where he teaches from Peter's boat and then gives Peter instructions on how to catch many fish before they learn from Jesus that they will soon be catching people for God.

The gospel writers that do speak of this event agree on one thing, Jesus invites this group to "come and see", and to "follow me", to become part of his core community of believers. According to Herb

O'Driscoll, a modern-day commentator on the lectionary and someone I believe has insight into what the scripture are revealing in our own time, Herb writes, "Jesus' decision to form a core community was a process which began with the calling of Andrew and Simon, James and John, and then the call to Philip to "follow me". Philip then finds his friend Nathanael and witnesses to Nathanael about his newfound relationship with Jesus. Philip invites Nathanael into a similar relationship with Jesus, the relationship which Philip himself has experienced."

Other sources, which are not recognized as books of our bible, but can still be relevant, also report on the call of the disciples by Jesus. From the gospel of the Ebionites, we read, "There was a certain man named Jesus, about thirty years old, who chose us, coming from Capernaum. He entered the house of Simon, who is called Peter, and said, 'As I passed the lake of Tiberius, I chose James and John, sons of Zebedee, and Simon, Andrew, Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas Iscariot, and Matthew, sitting in the tax office. I called you and you followed me. You, therefore, I desire to be the twelve...., twelve as witnesses to Israel."

To "follow me" or to "come and see" are markers of those who chose to be part of Jesus' core community. To bear witness to his ministry, to believe in his messiahship, and to invite others into knowledge of his identity as the Son of the living God. The disciples believed in him and their love for Jesus became infectious to others. It became their work to invite more and more people into relationship with Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is our task in this 21st Century to find more disciples for Christ. It is our role as believers to go out into the world and to find more disciples and to invite them into relationship with

our Creator, to fulfill God's desire that all will come to know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord of all as John 3:16 tells us.

Jesus told his followers that he would make them fishers of people and that is what he did. All Christians have that same command from God. All believers are to be fishers of people for the kingdom of heaven. That means that we must find the gate, the door, the window, or the path which will allow others to see God at work in our lives, so they will want to have that same sense of God's abiding love that they see in our lives. We need to speak and act in ways which allow God to speak into every individual's spiritual being, so that they may come to know the love of God within themselves.

I began this sermon by suggesting this to you that we are all invited into the love of God for all creation. In witnessing to others, we share our love for God. As others see the joy of believing and belonging which God's grace and love imparts to our lives, it may open a door into their spiritual centre where God's love can take hold and great things can happen.

"Come and see, God is working in the world today, through all believers who share the Word of God about the power of the ministry of Jesus Christ, and His redeeming grace. It is in their witness that he invites others to come into His love and peace." And, for this, we are thankful.

Amen

