

Year A Epiphany 2 18th January 2026

Isaiah 49: 1-7. 1 Corinthians 1:1-9. John 1:29-42

What do you want? What are you looking for? are Jesus's first words in John's Gospel. In other translations he says What do you looking for. Either way, It's a heck of a question. No easy Who Wants to Be a Millionaire starter question for Andrew and his unnamed companion.

It's both an invitation, but perhaps more importantly it's a challenge, a challenge that is as relevant today as it was 2,000 years ago. It's an invitation to self-examination, to look inside ourselves and decide what we really, really want. That is as true as it relates to our faith as it is to our career aspirations or our relationship aspirations or indeed our hobby aspirations.

In other words, What are you looking for is an invitation to examine ourselves in a way that will enable us to become the person we want to become, the person truest to ourselves, or rather the person God made us to be. So it's a big, big question. It might be better understood as something like What are you really searching for?

One of the features of the Gospels is how often Jesus responds to a question with a question of his own. But our Gospel reading perhaps suggest that that is more of a Jewish thing, because Andrew and his companion do exactly that – they respond to Jesus' question with a question of their own Where are you staying?

Now in Scotland, we all know what Where do you stay means. It means where do you live? It's not clear whether Andrew and his colleague are expecting an answer along the lines of I live at 20 Straight Street in Capernaum. Or I live next to Mark. Because the Greek word used here is Meno, which is regularly used elsewhere in John's Gospel, particularly in Chapter 15, and it really means abide.

The Gospel reading implies that Jesus did show them where he lived and slept. But that wasn't the real point of his open-ended invitation of 'Come and see Jesus. You want to see where I live, that's fine, but what I really want to show you is **HOW** I live, what makes me tick as it were.

We have to follow Jesus the whole way to find the answers to what he's about. One of the few things we know for sure about Jesus is that he isn't easy to pigeonhole, he's not easy to pin down, he's not always easy to find.

So his answer is more subtle and challenging than it appears on the surface. Because if we accept an invitation like that then we must be ready to see things that we don't expect to see or perhaps don't even want to see, we must be ready to see things that are new, and not only new but different to what we thought we knew. In other words 'come and see' is an invitation to admit we don't have all the answers, an invitation to be ready to change our minds, and in this instance let God change our minds. It's a willingness to accept that God may have more to show us, even though it may surprise us.

And that can be challenging because it makes us ask ourselves are we really looking for Jesus, or are we looking for something else.

So as would-be disciples we have to keep looking, keep seeing, keep finding, be willing to accept that those certainties about God that we hold on to may be incomplete or maybe even plain wrong. So it requires curiosity on our part

After all we are in the season of Epiphany, of God revealing new things, so the invitation to come and see is a logical consequence of that. We are celebrating the light of the world breaking into our lives, we are celebrating the fact that God is doing a new thing, that he has become human and bridged the gap once and for all between heaven and earth.

And just spending part of the day with Jesus was enough to convince Andrew and his unnamed companion that Jesus was the real deal. So off he goes to find his brother Simon and tells him we have found the Messiah and invites him to 'come and see' for himself, which Simon duly does.

Come and see this new thing that God is doing, come and see the Messiah who baptises with the Holy Spirit rather than with water, which was what John the Baptist was doing.

And as well as being willing to see new things, or even old things from a new perspective, Jesus also challenges us to allow ourselves to be seen by him and that can be difficult. Take Simon, Jesus looked at him and renamed him Peter – the Rock. If we allowed Jesus to really look at us, would we be as willing to be renamed, to be given a new identity in God in the way that Moses was at the age of 80

So what was it that prompted Andrew and his friend to take that risk and jump ship as it were and switch their allegiance from one rabbi to another at the drop of a hat. It was common for people in that era to hitch their metaphorical wagon to a particular rabbi to learn about Yahweh and how to be a good, observant Jew. But in this instance they just abandoned John without so much as a by your leave and made Jesus their lodestar.

In a sense though John the Baptist actively encouraged them to do so. For two days running he saw Jesus, who was of course his cousin although you wouldn't know if you relied solely on John's Gospel – far from it as John says I didn't know him.

Both times John described him Jesus as the Lamb of God, the second time in the hearing of Andrew and his friend. A day earlier he had said Jesus was the one who surpassed him. John is very clear about his role as he makes clear almost throughout the Gospels, he is the

one sent to prepare the way, when he is in prison he sends his disciples to check whether Jesus really is the one Israel is expecting and in Chapter 3 in John's Gospel the Baptist says very humbly that he must decrease so that Jesus must increase.

To put it another way, his job is to point to Jesus and away from himself. That's true for all of us isn't it? Our only job is to point to Jesus, to invite people to come and see.

I know I have mentioned Ami Townsley before, a traveller and addicted to alcohol and nicotine before he encountered Jesus. As he used to say to other addicts, I don't know any theology, all I can tell you is what Jesus has done for me. That's evangelism in a nutshell. Point to Jesus, tell people what Jesus has done for you and invite them to come and see for themselves.

It's interesting to contrast that with our Epistle from 1 Corinthians. Now obviously we are only hearing one half of the conversation because it's clearly Paul's response to what he has heard or read. But the gist of it is that some of the members of the Church in Corinth are arguing about which are the most important gifts to have.

Paul rightly tells them that they're missing the point. God has given each of them, as he has us, specific gifts, the point being that collectively they have all the gifts they need and if they are not together and united they are going to miss out.

As we enter the week of prayer for Christian Unity that is a lesson that the Church and the different denominations would do well to heed. The Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox denominations have different primary emphases, whether it be the Incarnation, the Cross or the Eucharist. We all need each other and we should accept that our differences are actually a gift from the Holy Spirit and therefore not a cause for condemnation or recrimination.

I want to end by returning to the idea of allowing ourselves to be seen by Jesus. Jesus looked at Simon and saw Peter. What does Jesus see when he looks at us. For a start he looks beneath all the things that we don't like about ourselves, all our fumbblings, all our mistakes, all our doubts. Believe it or not we are worth a second or third look. And if that's the case, then as disciples we need to be willing to offers others a second or third look, rather than condemn at first glance.

Looking again is a form of grace. Do we want to bless or to judge? Well, we know what Jesus' choice is. Which is why we need to ask the Holy Spirit to fill us with the grace and desire to make the same choice.