



Epiphany 2

THE NEW SHOFAR

I have found the Messiah - come and see!

Samuel 3:2-19 - John 1:35-42

January 14th, 2018

Disciples bring others to Christ

We have nothing indicating the content of the preaching of the John the Baptist, at least nothing about the true nature of Jesus the Messiah. What he did was point to Jesus as the Lamb of God. Anyone wanting to know any more, to have an experience of what his messiahship was all about would need to *follow me (Jesus)*. This would, in turn, become the fundamental, most powerful and successful form of evangelism in the history of the Church. John the Baptist is the primary example of this methodology. He pointed to Jesus and then encouraged Andrew to *go and see* Jesus, to have a personal encounter with the Lamb of God. John is the preacher who preaches Christ – and it worked.

Having encountered Jesus once, note how the Baptist *returns again* (the Greek suggests a deliberate and decisive act) to where he had earlier encountered Jesus. This time he brings along some of his disciples. It is out of this personal decision to bring others to Christ the Church is born and the evangelists reveals the expectation Jesus has of all those who choose to be disciples.

Jesus is ever inviting people to hear and to follow

Jesus *walks by* this group, another image used by John to help our understanding of discipleship. This is what Jesus does (and does continually). He “walks by”, inviting a response. One disciple (John) has set the scene by bringing disciples with him. They encounter Jesus *walking by* and engage with him. They, in turn, will go on to bring others to Jesus as they had themselves been brought to Jesus. These disciples *heard* what John was saying. It was not just the words but the intent of the words, the meaning of the words. This is how John understands “hearing”. It is having a personal experience, not only of who Jesus is but what Jesus means to them and to all humanity. They understood the inner meaning of what John was saying and offering. The important question is then raised by Jesus: *what are you looking for in life?*

Here's the challenge: How am I and we (our parish) going to offer others an experience of Jesus? This does not happen by chance or “luck” but must be a deliberate choice – John brought others to meet the Jesus he had encountered. A deliberate resolution needs to be made. What is it?

Here we have a challenge as much as a question seeking a response. It highlights a fundamental question of all human existence – *what are you looking for in life?* If this can be answered we are then in a position to set out our goals, the resolutions we need in order to live a fully human life in our human communities. The answer to this can be so easily presumed but unless it is articulated with some clarity, we find ourselves pursuing a range of possible roads to life. Or television advertisements show just how many answers the world has to this question. This is why Jesus asks that question: *What are you really, truly seeking in life? What is your priority?*

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A faith community that cannot answer this question in clear pastoral objectives and goals will find itself going round and round in ever decreasing circles. Disciples of Christ who cannot answer this question over and over again will find themselves missing the Christ who is *walking past* in different ways, in different settings and in different people, all the time calling us to *come and see*, to *follow* him in renewed and exciting ways.

Where do you live Lord? Can we too be there?

In what ways does Christ Jesus help us to set and achieve life's objectives? In the light of the feast of God sending his Son among us, as one of us, what can I resolve to change, to take up, to renew in order that I may better find Christ "walking past"?

The disciples respond to the invitation of Jesus with the question: *where do you live?/where is your home?* The rest of the Gospel will lead us to a revelation of the true dwelling place of Jesus – his home is with God. "Above", though this is not a geographical note or an indication of a physical location. Jesus is *staying* with God, he *abides with God* and is *God centred*. Find Jesus and we find God, the Father who sent him. Given it was late in the afternoon and the roads were dangerous places after sunset, Jesus did the culturally appropriate thing and offered them a room for the night. This, for John, is the very nature of Church –

believers coming together with Christ in their midst. The result of this encounter with Jesus is what leads Andrew to go and find his brother Peter to let him know *we have found the Messiah*. Importantly, we see how Andrew *brought him (Peter) to meet Jesus*. This is the way of true evangelism.

The world is in desperate need for lived discipleship

For John the Evangelist, the people of the world need disciples to be pointing out the presence of Jesus in their midst (*walking by*). While the dwelling place of Jesus is with his Father in Heaven, it is also a reality that he has *pitched his tent among us*. Even when we find it difficult to verbalize why it is we believe, it is the way our belief transforms the way we live that makes us effective witnesses to the Gospel and to the Kingdom. This is what makes faithfulness so difficult. It is much easier to speak in terms of creeds, for we can learn them. It is much more difficult to carry out true evangelism as it demands a living, intimate faith, a life with Jesus firmly in the decision-making centre of who we are.

From here where do we go?

The Messiah was the long-awaited Servant of God, the One sent by the Father that the world may be set free from all that limits the abilities of men and women to realize the fullness of their humanity and to bring peoples from *every tribe and tongue, people and nation* together as one people living under divine guidance and care. The Messiah was the one for whom the world was yearning, was praying and for whom the whole of creation was moving. It is far too easy for us to claim faith in God but a very different thing to find in Christ a genuinely life changing Messiah. We do not find our Messiah in church, we find the Messiah in our daily living and celebrate that find in Church.

In what ways and where in my life do I need God's Messiah? What am I prepared to take on that I may have the Messiah of God transform my life?

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