



EPIPHANY 2 A

16 January AD 2011

“Take your eyes off everything else, and behold the Lamb of God! You need not see anything else, nothing else is worth seeing; but behold Him.”

Ch. Spurgeon

Text: John 1:29-42

In Epiphany the Gospel readings will highlight Jesus making himself *manifest* to different groups of people. Today the first disciples are called; we are introduced to Andrew, John and Simon Peter as they “*behold the Lamb of God.*”

But the reading for this Sunday seems to tell us more about Andrew and John than it does Jesus. Before they enter our story they were followers of John the Baptist, and some conjecture that they were the cream of the crop. Probably John the Baptist’s staunchest critics, Andrew and John never-the-less would be the ones to teach a Bible class or head up a work project. When he needed money they would open their wallets. When John wanted a soup kitchen opened they’d collect food. Any pastor would want these fellows in his church.

The kind of disciples any pastor would want

But when John the Baptist sees Jesus for the second day in a row, and this time his disciples are with him, the Baptist points to Jesus and shouts, “*Behold the Lamb of God!*” This is the kind of thing that earns John his nick-name, “The Finger.” The great paintings of the Baptist show him pointing to Jesus. The response of these men is quick. John perceives and testifies; Andrew and John hear and follow.

It’s not that they are being disloyal to John; they have not switched loyalties. This is the moment they prayed for. So overjoyed was Andrew at finding the messiah that he searches out his brother, Simon, and he invites him to Jesus. Andrew becomes our role model; his is the behavior to emulate. Leading people to Jesus is what discipleship is about, it’s the work God gives Christians.

Jesus turned

Today’s reading shows us something else the disciples of Jesus should notice; “*Jesus turned,*” (v. 38). I’m not so brilliant that I came up with this insight on my own; but it’s worth looking at none the less. Quite often the Bible uses the word *turn* in the sense of *repent, stop sinning*. That word in Greek is *metanoia (μετανοια)*, it carries suggests that we completely turn around (180 degrees). But that’s not suggested here. After all,

Jesus has no need to repent of anything. He is experiencing no change of mind or heart. But he is turning himself around (*στρεψω*) and this is meaningful and important.

Consider that it is the day after his baptism, he has stepped forth from the river leaving behind Mom and his private life. The gospels show Jesus with a single-minded purpose from this point onward. He is headed to Jerusalem, he has an appointment with destiny. That's when these two youngsters follow him. Young they are, but determined and dedicated as I noted a moment ago. Perceiving their presence Jesus stops and turns around. He has time for them. He is not too busy to hear their important question.

I think they were caught unprepared. Jesus asks them—*and you and me too*, “what do you want?” This is their moment! They can ask, “How can we be saved? How do we get to heaven? Are you the messiah? What are you going to do? Can we be your followers?” But no. They ask, “Rabbi, where are you staying.” It's not a very profound question. It adds nothing to gospel, nor does it deepen our understanding of the life to which we are called. It's the epitome of a dumb question.

Dumb questions

I resonate with these guys. It's not that I was stupid, it's just that I was interested in other things than the teacher happened to be teaching. It may have appeared that I was usually out to lunch, but I was often deep in thought. So I tell my story about a fifth grade teacher who told my parents that I asked dumb questions. When they came home I got punished. From that day on through high school, I never asked another question.

But Jesus does berate these boys? No. He invites them follow, “*Come and see.*” Jesus the Son of God is on a mission to save the souls of all mankind. The One through whom creation came into being and who cares for it still has urgent and important work to do—of global significance! But he stops, he turns, and he hears the questions of a couple young followers. He knows them better than they know themselves. He patiently bears with them and invites them on the journey. Will they be more of hindrance than a help? Time will tell. “*Come and see.* (Follow me.)”

The One who has time for Andrew and John has time for you and me. He has time to hear the prayers we bring. I won't speak for you, but in my day I think I've prayed for more than a few dumb things. But God doesn't me cast off; he doesn't turn a deaf ear to our pleas.

The thing is when we call, God turns. He listens. The Easter hymn stanza captures it well reminding us, “he lives to silence all my fears, he lives to wipe away my tears...” and one line ends, “he lives to hear my soul’s complaint.”

I need you to remember two things from this morning. Called as God’s people, his church, it is our duty and privilege to make Jesus “*manifest*” –tell his story by any and every means the Lord puts at our disposal.

Second; I’m not going to say there are no dumb questions as far as God is concerned—there are dumb questions and we’ve all had them. But God has the time for you. *God is patient*, scripture tells us. (2 Pe 3:9) Yes, the things about which we are concerned sometimes pale when weighed in the balance of eternal matters. But God wants you. He has time for you. And when you call upon him in prayer, just remember, *he turns*.

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