

Sermon at the Cathedral Eucharist

Second Sunday of Epiphany

readings: [Isaiah 49.1-7](#), [1 Corinthians 1.1-9](#), [John 1.29-42](#)

15 January 2023

There are three distinctive parts to the Gospel reading today:–

1. John's witness,
2. the disciples choosing to follow and
3. what Jesus does with that.

For those of you who need structure and prewarning, that's the order I'll be dealing with the reading. Also, there will be 2 questions for you but these are rhetoric – in the sense that you'll have to do the thinking in your own time – I'm not expecting an answer today – but as always happy to discuss further if you want to reach out to me during the week.

Today's reading starts with John's witnessing to Jesus, he is pointing to the Light. Witnessing is difficult, not so much because you have to eat locusts and wear itchy camel hair shirts but because it involves being vulnerable and open to others not understanding our experience or even not believing it.

But if, like John, we are going to witness to Jesus we have to start somewhere. He started by stating who he was not: "I'm not the Messiah", he said. So I'm going to try and witness to you today by taking a leaf off John's book and telling you who I am not. Let me share my bit of testimony with you.

A few years ago I had a bit of a meltdown. That is probably understating it a bit... let just say that one night my husband found me in the utility room, in the dark, crying inconsolably and rocking myself. I'd been there a while... I managed to get help from my GP who sent me to a counsellor. She was wonderful. After two sessions or so, she stopped me in mid-flow and asked me out of the blue: "Carla, you do know you're not God, don't you?" You... do... know... you're... not... God... don't you?

Well, actually that was a true revelation to me. It hit me like a bolt, it was a real "God moment" to me. And I hope this doesn't sound like blasphemy, but no I didn't know I wasn't God! Well, I knew, but I'd be thinking and living like I was God, like it was my job to fix and mend and put everything right and funnily enough that didn't turn out so well.

John is never confused about who he is: I'm not the Messiah, or Elijah or the Prophet... but he is also very sure about who Jesus is: "And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." (v34)

So first important lesson in being a witness – know that you are not GOD. I have learnt the hard way that it is crucial that we know what is the work of God, and what is our work; and that we don't get these two things mixed up – expecting God to do what we must do, or, trying to do what God must do. This is the first bit of good news: You are not God. I am not God. There is another to whom we merely point. And that's our job, as witnesses, as disciples, as followers: our job is simply to point—over and over and over again—to Jesus.

Because the good news is not simply that you and I are not God. It is far better than that. The good news is that Jesus is the Son of God, upon whom the Spirit rests, the lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

First question for you: Is there somewhere in your life where you are trying to be God? If there is, what help do you need to stop?

The story moves on and John's followers start following Jesus. John had done his job. When Jesus notices them he asks them: "what are you looking for?"

What are you looking for? Some of you here have been following Jesus a long time, some of you are new to this and some may not even know why you came today. But whatever your conscious or unconscious seeking, you are here today. What are you looking for?

The disciples when asked this question answered with the bizarre question: "Where are you staying?" This probably does not mean, "where is your tent at, preacher?" More: where do you abide? Because we want to be with you, we want to follow you... And the answer comes, simple and short: "Come and see", which I always think of as Come and abide... "come and be": Come and be your true best self, come and be your true potential, come and be truly and completely alive in beauty and brokenness, come and know how you are truly loved! Come and be.

Is this what you are looking for?

The story moves on, and Andrew introduces his brother Simon to Jesus, and promptly Jesus goes on to change his name to Peter or Cephas (the Rock)!

Come and see, come and be, will bring changes. Whatever you are looking for, are you ready to let it change you?

In the words of the song by John Bell:

If I but call your name?

Will you quell the fear inside

And never be the same?

Will you use the faith you've found

To reshape the world around,

Through my sight and touch and sound in you

and you in me?

Something to ponder over in the coming week, perhaps?

Amen

**The Revd Carla Vicencio Prior
Canon for Community Learning**