



14 February, 2021

**When John's two disciples heard him say,
"Look! There is the Lamb of God"
they (left him and) followed Jesus.
Jesus asked them, 'What do you want?' "**

John 1:37-28

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Let's begin with a time of SILENCE followed by PRAYER

Listen to this hymn; centre you thoughts on Christ who calls us to follow Him.

HYMN Holy Spirit Come to Us

REFLECT on these WORDS

We approach God in worship and ask, *What offering do you want from us Lord?*

God pauses for a moment; His eyes well up and He says,

After all these years, after all the times I held you in My arms and comforted you, after all the occasions when I journeyed with you and we talked together, you still think that I want something from you? My child! All that you have, I gave you. All that you have, came from my abundance which you can neither measure nor weigh. All I want is what I don't have, ... and that is YOU!

Sacrifices, offerings and grand gestures do not delight God! He is Holy God. Approach Him with heart-felt joy to do His will, to follow His plan; above all, delight in being in His presence, for He has made the ultimate sacrifice of His Son to be your Saviour. The Son knows the way to the Father - follow Him!

PRAYER

Eternal and ever present God! We gather with a sense of expectancy. Subdue our own thoughts, and enthral us with Yours. Let the words we hear and speak and the songs we sing, transform us into the likeness of Your Son, Jesus our Christ. We surrender ourselves and our worship to You in the Holy Name of the Jesus our Risen Christ. **AMEN.**

HYMN I will enter His gates with Thanksgiving

PRAYER for OUR WORLD

Father of time and eternity! Creator of all Life and Master of all that is living! You meet us in every nook and corner of our lives. You invite us into a relationship with You, and through this, into relationships with others. You invite us into conversation with you, and you release us into action in Your world among Your people.

Our world Lord, is aflame with all kinds of contrasting passions - passion to speak truth and the passion to tell lies; the passion to speak peace and the passion to wage war; the passion to love and the passion to hate; the passion to look after ourselves and the passion to deny ourselves and take care of others. Father! We are sucked into these contrasting passions, and its not always clear which is Your way for us. Too often we get drawn into believing, what is right, is indeed wrong, and what is wrong should actually be, what You know is right!

Father! Our elected officials let us down; our appointed administrators disappoint us; our care-giver are humanly weak and stretched to capacity, struggling to meet the demands of our society. Forgive us for our lack of foresight and discernment in appointing those who preside over us, and direct our lives, and our lack of appreciation for those who work selflessly beside us.

We pray for your Church, Lord! May we be humble to accept your Holiness, knowing we are not living the life You planned for us. We are not worthy to carry the Name of Christ, as we don't know how to be Light and Salt in our world, as He was to us.

Father! We beg you to create a hunger in us for You and Your Word, that we may learn to be Your children in Your world, ministering Your love among those who need it most.

Lord! Forgive those who think they know best and have all the answers for all the ills in this world. May we all look to You, May we all accept the sacrificial way of live Jesus taught and may we learn to walk in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for Your glory in this world and in the new world to come. **AMEN**

HYMN

Jesus! Jesus! There is something about that Name

READING Gospel of John 1:35-51

On the following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. He looked straight at Jesus as he walked along, and said, *There is the lamb of God!* The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned round and when he saw them following him, spoke to them.

What do you want? he said. *Master, where are you staying?*, they replied.

Come and see, returned Jesus. So they went and saw where he was staying and remained with him the rest of that day. *(It was then about four o'clock in the afternoon.)* One of the two men who had heard what John said and had followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He went straight off and found his own brother, Simon, and told him, *We have found the Messiah!* (meaning, of course, Christ) and he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked steadily at him and said, *You are Simon, the son of John. From now on your name is Cephas* (that is, Peter, meaning a rock).

The following day Jesus decided to go into Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, *Follow me!* Philip was a man from Bethsaida, the town that Andrew and Peter came from. Now Philip found Nathanael and told him, *We have discovered the man whom Moses wrote about in the Law and about whom the Prophets wrote too. He is Jesus, the son of Joseph and comes from Nazareth.*

Can anything good come out of Nazareth?, retorted Nathanael. *You come and see for yourself'*, replied Philip.

Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him and remarked, *Now here is a true man of Israel; there is no deceit in him!*

How can you know me? returned Nathanael. *When you were underneath that fig-tree*, replied Jesus, *before Philip called you, I saw you.*

Nathanael exclaimed, *Master, you are the Son of God, you are the king of Israel!*

Do you believe in me, replied Jesus, *because I said I had seen you underneath that fig-tree? You are going to see something greater than that! Believe me*, he added, *I tell you all that you will see Heaven wide open and God's angels ascending and descending around the Son of Man!*

MESSAGE

Most scholars agree that John's account of Jesus' life is unique. It is not considered **synoptic** (*syn-* similar; *-optic* seen; *seen as similar*) as the gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke, which draw on the same narratives of Jesus' life, and present it in a similar progression and familiar language, a sign of **literary interdependence**. The synoptic Gospels tell us what Jesus said and did, focussing on the signs and sayings of Christ.

John's Gospel tells us **who** Jesus is. One of the "early Church fathers", Clement of Alexandria referred to "**the spiritual Gospel**" because of John's deep insight into Jesus' divinity.

Before proceeding further, let's agree to call the son of Zechariah and Elisabeth "Witness John", the author of the Gospel, "Disciple John".

There is, however, an underlying similarity between Disciple John's gospel and those of Mark and Luke (and to some extent, Matthew's). Mark starts with Witness John as Isaiah's promised messenger who declares, *Someone is coming after me whose sandals I am not worthy to untie*; Luke starts with Witness John, the son Zechariah and Elisabeth could not have, but had in their old age, both as an answer to prayer, and in keeping with God's perfect timing; and Disciple John connects God's Son who was present at creation, with Zechariah and Elisabeth's son whom "God sent ..." (1:6) as a **witness** to inform anyone who would listen, about the True Light.

You see, a witness' testimony is only as good as it verifies what the witness has **seen**; declared in the first person, a witness' claim can be depended upon, based on what they have **seen**. John's Gospel account is abounding with the verbs **see, seen** and **saw**¹, starting with, *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have **seen** His glory (1:14)*. The crucifixion of Jesus ends with, *The man who **saw** it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows*

¹ Bible Gateway counts 75 times these verbs are used in 21 chapters of John!

*that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe (19:35); The Resurrection account begins with, Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and **saw** that the stone had been removed from the entrance (20:1), and the post resurrection account ends with Jesus telling Thomas, Because you have **seen** me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not **seen** and yet have believed (20:29). This final verse raises interesting questions, and we shall get to it as we progress through the Gospel.*

Last week we read about Witness John, who **saw** Jesus coming towards him, who **saw** the spirit descend on Him like a dove, and having **seen** the dove single Him out from the crowd, witness John was to baptise Him. Witness John closes his presentation with the words, *I **saw** this happen to Jesus, so I testify that He is the Chosen One of God.* Witness John's claim to fame is, *I **SAW** it happen!*

The testimony of a trusted witness is very powerful. The witness' integrity shapes the validity of their testimony. Our text today helps us understand the transition between Witness John and Jesus; the former declares in the presence of two of his disciples, *LOOK! There is the Lamb of God!* His declaration can be trusted because he **saw** the dove descend on Jesus, the sign to baptise Him.

Two things follow that are central to our understanding of our Christian faith.

First, Witness John's declaration, *LOOK! There is the Lamb of God,* would have evoked and suggested images to those who would have read, or heard Isaiah's reading, foretelling the sufferings of the Messiah who was *oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth (in His defence); He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. As a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth.*²

Central to our Christian faith is our understanding that God's word is coherent and joined-up throughout human history. That which God reveals to His chosen people at one point in time, is relevant and revealed in God's time. The only way to trust God and take Him at His Word is to read it with the specific

² Isaiah 53:7-9

prayer that God reveals Himself and His Word to us. There will be many things God does **not** reveal to us, nor opens our minds to understand, but wants us to accept **in faith**. There might come a time and an occasion when God opens our minds to a specific understanding, and that is the time when we should act.

When this time comes, we must be prepared to answer the question Jesus asks Andrew and Disciple John, “*What do you want?*”? Do we really know what we want to do with the revelation God gives us? Do we want a deeper understanding for the sake of “showing off” our knowledge, or putting ourselves above others, God’s privileged prophet? The response God is looking for is, *If I reveal my Word to you, will you act on it?*

Which is Andrew and Disciple John’s response - they act on the revelation of God’s Word. They left Witness John and followed Jesus the Messiah (1:37).

Which brings us to the second point that is central to our understanding of our Christian faith. How do we come into a relationship with Jesus? Disciple John shows us four ways people enter into this relationship:

1. Andrew came into a relationship with Jesus through the preaching of Witness John
2. Peter came to Jesus because of the witness of his brother Andrew who declared, *We (Disciple John and I) have found the Messiah! We have **seen** Him and are convinced this Man is the Messiah!*
3. Phillip came to Jesus as a result of the direct call of Jesus - *He (Jesus) found Philip and said to him, ‘Follow me’.*
4. Nathaniel came to Jesus only when he overcame personal prejudices (*Can anything good come from Nazareth?*) through a personal encounter with Jesus (*Do you believe [Rabbi! You are truly the Son of God] just because I said I saw you under the fig tree?*

The second half of chapter 1 offers us three clear ways of entering into a relationship with Jesus the Christ:

1. through the reliable testimony of another person to whom God has revealed Himself. Witness John's testimony convinced Andrew, whose testimony convinced Peter.
2. through direct revelation as when Jesus called Philip, *Come! Follow Me!*
3. through a direct invitation by someone who has "found" Jesus for him/herself (Philip). Sometimes the person being invited has deeply ingrained prejudices and we cannot do anything to change their perceptions (Nathaniel a.k.a. Bartholomew - *bar*: son of; *Tolomai*). It is likely that Nathaniel was reading and contemplating on the passage we know as "Jacob's ladder", the dream in which he saw the angels of God ascending and descending on it between earth and heaven. Jesus uses this to convince Nathaniel, *You shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man*³

We cannot do what only God can do - we cannot change anyone's mind, we cannot lead them to salvation, we cannot promise them Heaven... none of this are within our authority to do or promise.

We all are witnesses to what God has done in **OUR** lives - *we have found the Christ; Come let me take you to Him, let me introduce you to Him, and let Him decide how He brings into fellowship with Him!*

This is our challenge - how can we live life as a **witness** of God at work in us. He has to first work **IN** us before He works **THROUGH** us to reach others.

AMEN.

LISTEN **Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling**

³ Genesis 28:10-17

BENEDICTION

Jesus Christ says to you, *I no longer consider you My servants or my disciples, but I consider you My friends. I do not want that you serve me (wash my feet) but I serve you (wash your feet).*

So, return to your world in this spirit of service, reaching out to those in need in the Name of Christ, and strengthened by the Holy Spirit who is present for you in every step you take.

Do this without care or concern, but always for the glory of God your Father who loves you more than you will ever know. **AMEN.**

HYMN Here I am Lord! Send Me!