

Second Sunday after the Epiphany - A (2026)

Isaiah 49:1-7

Psalm 40:1-12

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

John 1:29-42

‘When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi, where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and see.”’ In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Julie had asked me to pick something up from the grocery store, and *of course*, I didn’t write it down. I was confident that I would remember, especially since I was planning on stopping by the local Super One store later that afternoon, and I would just run in and grab the requested item. Sure enough, after meeting with a buddy of mine at a pub that shares a parking lot with Super One, I dutifully headed into the store. I walked through the sliding glass doors and went totally blank; what was I looking for? I spent the next 5-10 minutes meandering aimlessly around this large grocery store, looking for any clues that might trigger my memory as to what I was supposed to purchase. After walking up and down several of the aisles a couple of times, an employee asked me, “What are you looking for?” I sheepishly replied, “Honestly, I don’t have any idea. My wife asked me to pick this mystery item up, and for the life of me, I just don’t remember.” We both had a good laugh after which she said something to the effect of “It’s probably something to do with a dinner recipe.” “That’s it!” I concurred with great relief. I was to get some sour cream to go with the enchiladas she had made. She responded, “Let’s go down to aisle 4, and you’ll have plenty of options from which to choose.” We laughed all the way to aisle 4, upon which she left me to browse for my favorite and hoped that I enjoyed the enchiladas.

“What are you looking for?” Jesus asked the two disciples of John the Baptist who were intrigued by the Baptist’s proclamation of Jesus being the ‘Lamb of God.’ Jesus has this amazing ability to ask deeply revealing questions. “Do you love

me?” he asked Peter. “What do you want me to do for you?” he inquired of the blind man. Or to the disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” Each question cuts to the proverbial chase and solicits a deeply personal and revealing response.

‘What are you looking for?’ Sometimes we just don’t know, do we? While we can chuckle about my experience at Super One, I bet we all know of folks who just don’t know what they are looking for that can make their life complete and content. They don’t have a good understanding of why they’re here or what their larger purpose in life might be. During my long career in banking, I worked with numerous folks, especially younger colleagues, who were constantly looking for the next opportunity. Sure, I could attribute some of this eagerness to their level of ambition. But honestly, over time, I saw many of these individuals become more and more unmotivated and disillusioned. They may have achieved some career goals, but the satisfaction and joy were less with each rung up the corporate ladder they took. They were obviously looking for something that the job couldn’t provide.

The same goes for relationships; looking for that perfect ‘someone’ that will make everything right with the world. Sometimes it has to do with locale, thinking that the ‘big city’ will provide all that one needs versus the smaller community from which they came, or vice versa.

Certainly, John the Baptist knew what he was looking for: the Messiah. He had spent his life preparing himself for the mission of proclaiming that the one ‘mightier than he’ was coming, the one who he was unworthy to untie his sandals. Matthew tells a slightly different version of Jesus’ baptism in that John understood that Jesus was the one who should be baptizing him, not the other way around. But the evangelist writes that the Baptizer did not know that Jesus was the Messiah until he saw the Spirit descending and remaining upon Jesus, to which the Baptizer then testified to what he had heard and seen that Jesus was the Son of God. At long last, the Baptizer had found what he was looking for.

Are any of you still looking for something? Given our relatively mature status as a community, we’ve all seen and experienced much in life. In being with you these past couple of months, I do not hear bitterness or anxiety from you. I recognize

that issues of health and the loss of loved ones take their toll on us, but what I see and have experienced with you all is that in Christ, you have found the foundation upon which you stand firm against the trials and tribulations of this life. You have found the source of your true strength, and that life, though fraught with challenges and sorrow, has been filled with grace and comfort only available through your relationship with God. Even if this is not the case for some of you here today, the fact that you're here nonetheless speaks to an inner desire to seek that which is true and life-giving, filled with contentment and shalom.

The other aspect of this story I find compelling and relevant is that after the two disciples ask Jesus where he was staying, his response was an invitation to "Come and see." Jesus does not tell them a location; he invites them to come and check it out. Jesus invites them to experience for themselves what is going on and what he is all about. Giving an address, if you will, is not the same as inviting someone to come and be involved. An invitation is an opportunity to enter into a relationship. Jesus is always inviting, never demanding one's attendance or participation.

Children are great at this, aren't they? They don't want to tell you what they've done; they want you to *see* what they've done. I can tell you all day long about the amazing views and watching the weather come and go when I was at seminary on 'the Mountain' at Sewanee. You might be able to relate to sunsets or panoramic views you've experienced, but until you have a chance to see what I've seen, to experience what I've experienced from that mountain top, it's just me telling you. The same goes for our life here at St. Paul's. We can tell others that we're generous, loving, and friendly, treat everyone like family, and support various community causes. That is all fine and good. But until someone joins us in these experiences, it's our story of community that is probably quite similar to other stories of other communities. Being told about the sounds and smells of a baseball game is not the same as experiencing those sounds and smells for yourself. For those of you who ski, telling me of your exploits racing down your favorite hill sounds terrifying to me. Only the experience would inform me.

Jesus offered the two disciples an opportunity to come and see what he was all about and how his message of the coming kingdom would transform them. Jesus invited Zacchaeus to come down out of a tree so that they could share a meal

together. Jesus offered the rich young ruler an opportunity to live a truly abundant life. Jesus offers each one of us the opportunity to experience in a new and meaningful way ‘come and see’ what he’s up to in the world and in our lives. It is an open invitation, and we refuse it at our own peril; not that we’ll be miserable, but that the abundant and purpose-filled life he offers will not come to fruition without our saying ‘yes’ to his invitation.

Dear friends, what we’re all looking for is found in Jesus Christ. His invitation for shalom, joy, compassion, hope, and love can only be found in an experience with the risen One. Yes, we can and should share our stories of conversion and transformation, of how Christ has filled the emptiness in our lives. More importantly, though, is our willingness to invite and include others to experience this reality for themselves. Whether this experience is found within a faith community or not, on a mountaintop or in death’s dark valley, Jesus beckons all to ‘Come and see’ in order to find what all are looking for. There is joy and excitement in the seeking and contentment in the finding.