

Dear friends,

John 1.29-42

In today's gospel, we have a change of leadership of some sorts. We hear about John, the Baptist, the one who prepares the way of the Lord, and how he points out the one who is to come after him to his followers: Look, here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

John, who has made a name for himself and has gained authority among the people through his

actions and his legacy, now authorizes Jesus by testifying that he is the one everyone has been waiting for, the Messiah, the Son of God.

Now that's a huge claim, and though it may not convince people right off the bat, it gets some interested in Jesus. We hear that there are two of John's disciples who start following Jesus. And the gospel story actually is a little creepy here, maybe even comical. It sounds like those two are following Jesus from a distance, maybe a little unsure, maybe whispering to each other as they walk along, checking this guy out. Okay, John may say he's the one, but how can we be sure? This guy doesn't look like a Messiah. Kinda ordinary.

And Jesus notices at some point that there are those two guys following him, and he seems a little annoyed with them, as probably most of us would be if we realized that we are trailed by someone. What are you looking for?

What are you looking for? Jesus, the one who is being checked out, turns the tables on those two men and makes them the object of scrutiny: so, what is your agenda here? Why are you following me? Why ARE you following me?

The two, caught in the act, so to speak, don't really have an answer. Which, if you think about it, actually is a good thing; it shows that they are open to experience what this man has to teach them and to offer them. They don't say: well, we expected a king, a mighty warrior, a guerilla fighter against the Romans. Those two seekers instead ask a simple question: Rabbi, teacher, where are you staying?

Now this may sound kind of odd to our modern ears, but what it means is: may we join you? May we spend time with you? May we learn more about you and from you? And Jesus extends the invitation: come and see!

Come and see – check it out. Experience for yourselves. Jesus does not expect folks to follow him just because they heard he might be the one. Jesus doesn't expect folks to

follow him just because he got endorsed by John. Jesus doesn't expect folks to follow him blindly, but wants them to see and come to their own conclusions. And see they will. After spending the day with Jesus, after listening to him, after learning more about him and from him, one of them, who is now identified as Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, is convinced: he's the one. And so Andrew spreads the word and gets his brother, Simon, on board as well. And now it is time for Simon to see and experience.

When we make an effort to point beyond ourselves to God, we are already showing God to the world: and it is by making an effort to show God to the world that we point beyond ourselves to God. That is our calling as Christians, because Christ says to every single person, "Come and see."

And if it sounds like a paradox too hard to understand, let alone put into action, then don't worry. Because we don't do it by our own efforts or understanding. Just as Paul reminded the Corinthian Christians, "God is faithful", and he will strengthen us. When we are faithful to him, when we put our trust in him, we will not lack in any spiritual gift. Christ says to us today, "Come and see." I do not know exactly what I will see. I certainly don't know what each of you will see. But I am sure that when we come to the Lord

with open hearts and minds, we will see what we need to see, and it will change our lives. And our lives will keep being changed, for at every moment of every day Christ says to every one of us, "Come and see."

And through our lives, we who are called to be saints will be able to fulfil our dual role of pointing to Christ, and of being the body of Christ. Every single thing we do will meet its twin fundamental aims, and our church will grow. We, who know that in Christ there is one greater than us, we will draw people to us, even as we point them beyond ourselves saying, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" Let us open ourselves to God afresh today so that he may change us, so that we as the body of Christ may live lives which give to the world Christ's own invitation:

"Come and see."

Epiphany is the season of the revelation of the divine nature of Jesus Christ, a season during which we hear a lot about the light, from the star of Bethlehem to the bright appearance of Jesus on the mountaintop during the transfiguration. If you will, there is this spotlight on Jesus Christ during this season. And, unlike many powers that are in this world today, Jesus wants to be seen, Jesus wants to be experienced – there is no reason to hide. Jesus wants to

make clear who he is and what he is for the world. Come and see!

Jesus calls us into the very active participation in this process. Just as he encouraged his potential disciples back in the day to employ use their senses – and their sense – so of course we are encouraged today to use our senses and our sense as we figure out who Jesus Christ is for us today.

This is a living faith, a very active faith, a faith that is not done once and for all or stagnant, but a faith that is ever moving, like waves in an ocean. The ocean never changes, and yet there is movement. We are invited to come and see, and then come and see again, for we might have a different perspective on things, or forgot to look at a certain aspect the last time around. And so we may experience Christ in ways he haven't really experienced him before. And what this Christ means for us as we live our lives in this world today.

At the same time Jesus' invitation to us to 'come and see' is also an urgent appeal to stay alert in this world today. Just as God doesn't expect us to follow him blindly, but urges us to see for ourselves, so God urges us to keep our eyes open and not to follow any leader or ideology too quickly and too trustingly and with eyes wide shut; to use our senses –

and our sense – and come to our own conclusions instead of trusting some endorsement or propaganda – or sentiment we might have about things.

God urges us to keep our eyes open and see what is happening in this world, and to look at things in the light of what Jesus has taught us by his example: to love our neighbour. To pray for our enemies. To hold others accountable if they mess up at the same time that we love them. To feed the hungry, shelter the homeless and welcome the stranger. To share what has been entrusted to us. To care for the weak. To forgive as we have been forgiven. To counter hate with love. To have mercy.

How is the world doing in the light of all these things? How are our leaders doing in the light of the teachings of Jesus Christ, in the light of God? How are we doing in the light of all this? For in the end, it all comes back to us and how we live our faith faithfully.

Come and see. Stay alert. Witness to what you experience. And live your life in the light of God's love.

Wolfgang +