

## **"Come and See"**

Isaiah 49:1-7; I Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-42

January 16, 2011 -- 2nd Epiphany

Isaiah 49:1-7

Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away! The LORD called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me. {2} He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away. {3} And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." {4} But I said, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my cause is with the LORD, and my reward with my God." {5} And now the LORD says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the sight of the LORD, and my God has become my strength-- {6} he says, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." {7} Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, "Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, {2} To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: {3} Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. {4} I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, {5} for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind-- {6} just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you-- {7} so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. {8} He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. {9} God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

## John 1:29-42

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! {30} This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' {31} I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." {32} And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. {33} I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' {34} And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." {35} The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, {36} and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" {37} The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. {38} When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" {39} He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. {40} One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. {41} He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). {42} He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter ).

Ah, it's Epiphany, the season of the star and kings and proclamations to the gentiles and recognition, over and again, that light has come into the world in the form and person of Jesus Christ. Epiphany is all about that little light bulb coming on over our heads like in the cartoons when the character cries, "Aha," that means, "oh, that's it!," or "now I get it!," as the light dawns. As a liturgical season in the church year Epiphany intends for us to make the connection that God has made the connection – between God and us -- when we come to understand who Jesus is and what God has done for us in him.

Epiphany is the season of 'getting to know you, getting to know all about you...' It's the season of pronouncement like the one we heard from Isaiah today. God says to the chosen one, the one who has come, the Messiah, the savior of the world, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." What it means is that just being the savior of Israel isn't enough...this one who is come, who is incarnate deity, the bright and morning star, the lion of Judah, the very son of God and yes, the lamb of God who comes to take away the sin of the world, is *for everybody*. Epiphany from the star shining in the east to the wise men coming, to Mary, Joseph and Jesus escaping Herod's sword and going home by another way and the 'awe of old Anna and Simeon in the temple saying, 'we've seen him now we can go in peace, to the Baptism of

Jesus and the calling of disciples, to the moment of transfiguration – Epiphany is all about letting a world in on that which is NOT intended to be a secret – God has sent his lamb into the world and his name is JESUS.

In the passage from John today there is this interesting exchange between Jesus and a couple of disciples of John the Baptist. Yes, that's right. In John's gospel, John the Baptist has disciples. Followers. Probably part of the desert community in which he lived. Anyway, having heard John speak about the lamb of God they are curious. Earlier in the passage, John has supplied us with the song title 'Behold the Lamb of God,' just like the choir sang with a little help from George Frederic Handel, and as we listen, in our mind's eye we can see John watching Jesus as he comes closer. Just the day before he stood with him in the Jordan and baptized him and now with his entourage around him he says to them, 'see that guy?' He's God's lamb, the one who will take away the world's sin. Next to him all I am is the messenger. My job is and always has been to point him out to you."

Again, the next day the same thing happens and a couple of them decide they need to know more, so they follow Jesus. Don't we feel the same way? When someone famous is pointed out to us, someone who is reported to be remarkable, someone who demands our attention, don't we want to know more? Don't we want a closer look? They did so they follow him.

The disciples, one of whom was Andrew, thought he was hearing a new message, like hearing a new song and trying to catch the lyrics. So following Jesus he bolsters his courage and is about to speak to him when Jesus asks him the question Jesus ultimately asks all of us, 'what are you looking for?'

"What are you looking for?!" is a question that's loaded with meaning. What do you need? What do you want? What is it that you are seeking? What is it that we are looking for in our living? What do we want to know from Jesus so that we can know the lyrics to a song to proclaim to the whole world that we know him?

Maybe you are like me, more and more, what I want to know, what I am looking for is some meaning for the madness. What I would want to ask Jesus is what is going on? When each new day it is increasingly difficult to push up and out and away from the blanket of the dank and dangerous darkness that covers us. We need something some little jingle, some happy little song would sure help, some 'don't worry be happy' kind of message. Have there ever been more rancorous times? Has there ever been more meager displays of civility from the broadcast booths to the halls of congress? Have we ever felt more wary of public gatherings, not merely from the threat of outside agitation, but from people who are supposed to be like us, who look like us, but whose minds and hearts contain a kind of rage most of us find not simply appalling, but incomprehensible? Don't you send your kids out each day with an extra

hug just because you don't know what might happen? Tell me when you're driving across town and you get cut off and you want to offer a blast on the horn that your hand doesn't stop!! Because you don't know what the person might have on the seat beside them.

How desperately we want to return over and over and over to the small stable to witness again the birth of the little lamb of the world, Jesus, and dwell in the contemplative 'away in a manger' and 'silent night' that yields to the raucous promise of 'joy to the world, the lord is born?' We always need some Christmas to lighten things up with happy songs and colorful lights and good will and talk of peace but what the world could really use is some Epiphany. We need some words to weave together to tell of God's glory, grace and mercy, to sing out for a world starving for a new song of hope, for a new melody to bridge us over the troubled waters of our complex and cruel existence? We need a tune other than the dirge that hums in us when yet another tragedy occurs, the woeful sound of mothers crying in the streets? We need an Epiphany set some words to music?

Maybe we need to do what those disciples did. Maybe we need to find out what he has to say to the void in us, to the shrouded mystery, to the desperate need to find what we are looking for? Those two disciples ask the rather odd question, 'where are you staying?' Either because they. Like we,

need to find out where he is and spend some time with him or because they couldn't think of anything else to say.

And he says to them and us, "Come and See." After an afternoon they knew what they needed to know. And they began to spread the word – we have found the messiah, the savior, the one who has come, the lamb of God who will take away the sin of the world. Our king. They found their song.

We are no different. We need to see, to hear, to know... the one who says to us, "Come and See." We need to find out where Jesus is and go there. Here – in our doubt, our fear, our anxiousness, our agitation, our regret, our longing, our confusion, our anger, our conflict, our stubbornness, our apathy, our acquiescence, our pride, our arrogance, our lost-ness... Here there is no song – but when he says, 'Come and see' he invited us to an Epiphany moment -- He is our God. He is our King. He is our savior. He is our solution. He is our mercy. He is our grace. He is our love. And the song he gives us to sing is 'fear not, have faith, I am with you -- always.' It's why he became one of us,,, to save us from... our.... Selves...Aha....