

WELCOME 8th January 2023 – Epiphany '23 A

John 1:29-42

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! **Bible Study Qs** are there to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word/work in your life, & so you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups** on Friday @ 1p.m. Which will resume THIS Friday!

As we move into this week... "PLUS 1"

In the etiquette of a by-gone era, +1 on your invitation was a signal that the host wanted **you** to bring a guest. They were throwing a party & the celebration wouldn't be at its best unless **you** were there & **your** enjoyment would be greater if you had someone at your side with whom to share it...hence the +1.

"Come and **see.**" John the Baptizer pointed people to Jesus as the highest joy... deepest satisfaction...all-embracing love of God, & to the curious & the cautious Jesus simply says, "Come & see." Those who do immediately find a +1...someone with whom they can share the joy satisfaction & love...and the kingdom grows...

Which tells us what?

Being a spectator to faith isn't enough.

Living off the experience of someone else just won't cut it.

Jesus stands before us & invites us to live in a real responsive relationship with the Father that leads us into the world for the purpose of widening the reach of his kingdom. **Jesus** invites us to come experience firsthand living from his presence with him into the life of someone else.

We'll experience that together today...and pray for your +1.

Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Gracious and loving God, source of all wholeness, forgiveness, and mercy; send your Spirit today heal those who are torn, mend those who are broken, & protect those who are fragile. Enable us, O God, through the gift of your steadfast love to go to those who are far from you to point the way home into your arms. Give us boldness with compassion & courage with kindness to love as you have loved & give as generously as we have received... In the name of your beloved Son Jesus who names us your beloved sons & daughters...we pray. Amen.

Let's Sing and then hear God's word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. When you receive good news, with whom do you share it first? Why them? Then who?
2. Think of someone you know who has not yet responded in faith & obedience to Jesus and is resistant to the "Look! and Come & See" you have offered... Now what?

Epiphany '23 A – It's TIME! KINGDOM PURPOSE

I've shared with some of you that I was a bit overwhelmed by all the people at Charis & Aaron's wedding. I wasn't in charge of the guest list, or much else thankfully, so I didn't know how many would be attending. It made sense later when I thought about it...They've lived in a large circle of friends uni ministry & family lots of siblings & cousins...some of you know what that's like & seemed like anyone who could be there was. I loved wandering around after the service & just seeing who was there...

Like I say...it made sense really...A day of joy, love & celebration & they tried to pack the house w/ as many people as possible. I invited people to worship w/ us C-mas Eve & used the same words...pack the house. Leonie's mum turns 90 late this year & we're already trying to work out when we can gather her siblings & 6 children, 17 grandchildren, growing numbers of great-grandchildren for a day of joy, love & celebration & WE want to pack the house w/ as many people as possible. WE want lots of people to come.

We understand that about parties, & weddings, & family reunions. 40th wedding anniversary! We know that days of joy, love & celebration are **better** w/ more people around & we want to pack the house w/ as many people as possible. **We** want people to come. What the Bible tells us is that **that** is how God feels about us.

From the very beginning Scripture tells us we're created to be in relationship w/ God...intimate, personal, face-to-face relationship w/ our Creator. We are hand-designed by God for that purpose. Our lungs are filled w/ the very breath of life from God Himself for that purpose...and from the instant **THAT** goes awry, when human disobedience disrupts God's good intimate relational design, God calls out, not "Shame on you...I'm going to get you" but "Where are you?" From **THAT** moment; God's on-going call to us is "Come back to me."

One of Jesus' coolest parables compares the Father to a King who throws a great banquet & summons guests who make all sorts of excuses for not coming; so the king sends his servants out "into the streets & alleys of the town (to) bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind & the lame...& then out to the roads & country lanes (to) make them come in, **so that my house will be full.**" (Lk. 14:21-23) God calls us into his presence where there is joy & love & celebration & God wants to pack the house...+1+1+1 Later in his ministry Jesus promised that very result... "...when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself." (Jn. 12:32) Jesus' very nature...his purpose for coming as one of us was to continue to call the human race back to its rightful place near the heart of God, & to draw us all in by giving himself over to death so we might have life.

I love John's 1st public words about Jesus: **The** next day John saw Jesus coming toward him & said, "Look! The **Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world! He is the one I was talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me who is **far greater** than I am, for he **existed long before me.**' I did not recognize him as the **Messiah**, but I have been baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel." Then John testified, "I saw the **Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven & resting upon him.** I didn't know he was the one, but when God sent me to baptize with water, he told me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit descend & rest is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I saw this happen to Jesus, so I testify that he is the **Chosen One of God.**"

John had been preaching a baptism of repentance in preparation for this precise moment. **Repent** is such a great word. We attach the emotion of "feeling sorry for doing something bad" but that's so off base as to be laughable. It really means "turn away from danger toward safety." In John's context: **Come** away from where you are; where there's danger and come to God where it's secure & good."

Every image John uses would make perfect sense to the Jews of his day...every dot John connects to Jesus is a reminder of what God has promised he would do in the hearts & lives of his people to heal the chasm of rebellion they have created. John points directly at Jesus as God's final response to human sinfulness, ultimate answer to human brokenness, supreme reconciliation to human alienation & total restoration to our distance from God...John points right at Jesus & says **He's** the one the world's been waiting for to put all things right again."

But what we have to see here is that as John points to Jesus as the one through whom God makes all things new...John sees Jesus...

- NOT as a doctrine to be memorized, filed & forgotten
- NOT as a dogma to be discussed & debated
- NOT as an opinion to be weighed/studied/researched.
- NOT as the new morality cop to whip us into shape

John points to Jesus as God's original plan all along...as **God's** personal embrace of a dying world so that all might have life in His Name. John knows that what the world needs isn't more information about God. We don't need more guidelines on morals/ethics/self-esteem tucked away in our heads for a rainy day. We don't need some new emotional psychological strategy to overcome some background woundedness. We need to be saved from ourselves, from our own sin, from the forces that are larger than we are & ultimately kill all of us. We need someone who loves us enough to die w/ us, to die on our behalf so that death might once & for all be destroyed. We need someone whose love for us is bigger than our brokenness & stronger than death...John says...Jesus is that someone.

Here's the thing...human sinfulness isn't just that we do bad things...and it's **NOT** that we are bad people. **Human** sinfulness is that each of us believes deep in our hearts that we are in control (of our own lives & the world around us)...that when push comes to shove we can live the way we want, do the things we want, & get our way all we want....that we determine our own identity establish our own security & manifest our own destiny. We genuinely believe we can define what's true...real... authentic. Even when biology, Bible, common sense say otherwise. **Human** sinfulness sees "self" as the center of the universe when that "center" belongs to God alone. We genuinely believe we are God. Every sin is a sin of the 1st Commandment

Jesus comes to say "Enough of that...trust me." Jesus is God's personal embrace of a dying world so that all might have life in His Name. Jesus is born for a KINGDOM PURPOSE...so that all might have life in his Name, *but even more* so that all who have life in his Name will also live for that kingdom purpose...sharing that invitation to life in him with others...+1ing others into the BtTh banquet. Which is what John does...

The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. As Jesus walked by, John looked at him & declared, "Look! There is the Lamb of God!" When John's two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus. Jesus looked around & saw them following. "What do you want?" he asked them. They replied, "Rabbi" ("Teacher"), "Where are you staying?" "Come & see," he said. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place where he was staying, & they remained with him the rest of the day.

Notice...John just points at Jesus. He offers no explanation other than *Jesus is the one through whom God makes all things new*. All the ancient promises, all the longings of your heart, the sorrows of the past, the hopes dreams aspirations that are falling into dust...fears worries anxieties obsessing over...He's the One who makes those broken pieces a coherent whole. Andrew & maybe Philip think that's the deal they wanted all along & take off after Jesus...What happens next?

John doesn't tell us all the interesting details...but what he does tell us is they ask Jesus, "Where are you *staying*?" That's not, Whose house are you sleeping in while you're here? What hotel are you booked into? Gk word **μεινω**...abide remain stay dwell 40X in John & 30X more in his letters means this is important...is about where a heart finds its home...where life is shared & made complete...*What do you want?* Whatever place makes your heart whole...because we want **THAT**. They went with Jesus & remained there all day. **Where** was that? What happened? We don't know; but we know that when your heart is where the heart of Jesus is it's a place where there's fullness in relationship w/ the Father & the Kingdom grows not by force, but by fascination...wonder...delight...love...joy. Wherever they spent the day...it was w/ Jesus & that was enough...**Jn 17:3** – *Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, &*

Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. not doctrine dogma opinion morality emotional psychological strategy ethics self-esteem...We need someone whose love for us is bigger than our brokenness & stronger than death...Jesus is that someone.

From then on it's +1...**Andrew** went to find his brother, Simon, & told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means "Christ"). Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. **(vs45)** Philip went to look for Nathanael & told him, "We have found the very person Moses & the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth...Come & see for yourself." Which tells us what? Being a spectator to faith isn't enough. Living off the experience of someone else just won't cut it. Jesus stands before us & invites us to live in a real responsive relationship w/ the Father that leads us into the world for the purpose of widening the reach of his kingdom. **Jesus** invites us to come experience firsthand living *from* his presence *with* him *into* the life of someone else.

I would venture the great majority of us have been acquainted with Jesus most of our lives...but many of us have rarely/never said to a friend or relative or neighbour "You know...where you are right now is the place where I find Jesus most helpful for me. What you just said is where I find Jesus gives me the most strength. Can I share that with you?" "Come & see for yourself" What stops us? What freezes the invitation on our lips or grabs us by the throat to silence us?! Mostly fear...preserve a relationship, don't want to look dumb, think we have to defend the failings of the church or ourselves... but it's not about us or the church...or indisputable proof...fix It's about him...the risen ruling Jesus who dwells abides resides in us who makes all things new & puts all things right w/ the Father...we dwell abide live reside find our heart made whole only in him & w/ him working through us say only *Come & see*.

TAKE IT HOME - PUT "SUCCESS/FAILURE" OUT OF THE PICTURE...

Who will be your + 1 to "come and see" this week?

Let's pray...

Lord Jesus come alive in us today. Fill us with your Spirit and your strength. Move through us to gather your harvest for all eternity. Walk with our feet, touch through our hands, see through our eyes and speak through our lips. Makes your good news evident in all we are and do. We pray for that person you've placed on our hearts...that your Spirit would draw them to you & that same Spirit would put us in their path, not as an obstacle but as a living signpost & witness...Through your holy name we pray...Amen