

Isaiah 49:1-7
1 Corinthians 1:1-9
John 1:29-42
Psalm 10:1-12

The Second Sunday after Epiphany
St. Barnabas Bainbridge Island
January 19th, 2020
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The Light

When my son was a senior in high school, parents were offered the opportunity to “purchase” a ¼ page or a ½ page or even a full page of the Bainbridge High School year book. Parents could do anything within the confines of good taste with their purchase. Brilliant student marketers invited parents to fill the pages with childhood photos and pithy sayings, to make their student’s page a tribute or perhaps a joke! The response was fabulous – at least in the eyes of the parents, who rushed to fill pages with all manner of things, both meaningful and embarrassing. I’m not sure all the students were thrilled.

There were the awkward-aged pictures of people who hadn’t yet grown into their teeth or their ears or their noses. There were the less than graceful ballerina recital pictures and the swing and a miss baseball photos. There were funky family pictures that surely had meaning for moms & dads, but not so much for the student body. And of course, there were the victorious “good job!” potty training pictures that I’m sure horrified more than one BHS senior. I decided to take another tack. In my little quarter of a page, I posted one of Simon’s favorite Thoreau quotes... “Go confidently in the direction of your dreams...” I also wrote a personal note I can’t remember all of, but I do remember the last line. “Remember to look at the light.”

“Look! Honey, look at the light.” If I said that once to my son in his growing up years, I said it one hundred times. I’ve said it at least that many times to Jim and he to me. We say it because looking at the light and watching it change gives us pause, cultivates curiosity, and helps us appreciate the vastly changing beauty of a creation that is vibrant and alive.

Remember to look at the light.

Remember to pause.

Remember to lift your eyes from your paper, from your books, from your screen.

Remember to notice the incredible changing beauty around you.

Remember to look at the light.

As we move out of the season of Christmas and into this season of Epiphany, there will be a great deal of looking at the light. Epiphany means manifest, seen, recognized, known. And in the church season of Epiphany we’re offered wonderful opportunities to look at the light, look for the light, look to the light, and maybe even to become the light.

The season of Epiphany is the season of light.

Watching and waiting in the dark of Advent is behind us. And the Christ Light that was born in that little stable in Bethlehem is about to spread far beyond the cows and the sheep and the

shepherds and the holy family. Epiphany, the day the wise ones reached the manger, guided by a light so bright that they found their way from far off, foreign lands, heralds the season to remind us that the Light of Christ is for everybody. Remember the words of the prophet Isaiah: "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, all the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Remember to look at the light.

It's the same admonition John the Baptist offers us this morning, the same admonition he offers all throughout his ministry. "Look!" Here is the Lamb of God, here is the one who will take away the sin of the world, here is the one who will bring an end to our separation from God, here is the one who is himself the Light. The scripture passages we hear in Epiphany offer us the opportunity to look at, and to consider the many ways Jesus, the Christ Light, reveals himself to us and to the world. And while that all sounds sort of heady, Jesus actually makes it very simple. John the Baptist cries "Look!" and Jesus asks, "What are you looking for?"

What are you looking for?

Does something come immediately to mind when you hear that question? Or do you need a little time? Close your eyes. Breathe deeply. What are you looking for? "What **are** you looking for?" Those are the very first words Jesus speaks in John's gospel, you know. It's a good question. What are you looking for?

This isn't always an easy question to answer. And like many of us who don't know the answer when confronted with a difficult question, Andrew and his companion respond with a question of their own. "Teacher, where are you staying?" What? That seems like a random response.

Question: What are you looking for?

Answer: Where are you staying?

Next answer: Come and see. And so they do. They follow Jesus to the place where he is staying, and because it is late in the day, they stay, they abide with Jesus for the duration. What are you looking for? Where are you staying? While these would-be followers of Jesus answer his question with a question of their own, I think perhaps their question that stands in for an answer, in the end, really is their answer. Listen...

We are looking for where you are staying. We are looking for where you are teaching. We are looking for what you are teaching. **We are looking for you.** They may not have realized that was their answer, but it was. We are looking for you.

And what does Jesus say in reply? Come and see. Come and sit with me. Come abide with me. This word "abide" is a very important word, and a very important idea for John. Jesus uses this word over and over again, to describe the way he is in relationship with the father and the way we can be in relationship with him. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. *John 15:9*

Abide with me. It doesn't seem like much, does it? But sometimes abiding with God or being the Love of God, the Light of Christ as we abide with one another is really the most important thing we do. I learned this as a mother, as a partner, as a daughter, as a hospital chaplain, as a caretaker, as a pastor, as a commuter, as human among other humans, some very like me and some utterly unlike me. Being the Love of God, the Light of Christ, being truly present with one another is so important, in fact, that it is the defining factor of discipleship for John. While this story doesn't have the same feel as the stories of the fishermen dropping their nets or the tax collector leaving his booth, this is, in John's gospel, the first story of Jesus calling his disciples. It's important to notice that Jesus doesn't begin with commandments, doesn't assign them tasks and work, doesn't begin a training regimen of any kind. It doesn't even sound like he's doing any significant instructing. He simply invites Andrew, his unnamed companion, and Simon to come and see, to abide with him, to be in relationship with him. And he does that because being in relationship is the most important part of being a disciple.

That's the way Jesus invites us into discipleship too. It's the way Andrew invited his brother Simon into discipleship and it's the way we can invite others in too. Not by assigning tasks and work, not by telling people what we think they need to know, not by discussing right and wrong, good and bad, holy and not holy.

The way we invite others into discipleship is by abiding *in* God, and abiding *with* each other. The love of God, the Light of Christ is so big, so bright, so beautiful, that we're all drawn to it. That Light is the thing we are all looking for. And when we find it, here's what happens: We ourselves become the Light. We abide in the Light and the Light abides in us.

In this season of Epiphany, let's not be shy about being that Light for somebody, or maybe even anybody we meet. Let's remember to look at the Light. Let's *be* the Light. Let's remember what we heard in the Christmas story... The people who walked in darkness have seen a great Light... and then they began to reflect that light, to let it shine in their own stories. We are those people, my dears. We have seen a great Light and now we are that Light. The Christ Light in you is what the whole wide world is looking for. So shine on, beloved, shine on. Amen.