

Grace and Peace be to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

*The next day, John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold!"*

Behold! This word could very well summarize the season after Epiphany. Behold! Look! See! Take notice! There is something important happening here, and you *must* pay attention. John, the last of the prophets and the forerunner of Christ, informs this moment.

The people gather on the banks of the Jordan, coming to repent of their sins and to be baptized by John. From their midst steps one whom they do not know, yet John knows. John had seen the Spirit descending upon Him as a dove when He had come up out of the water. This is He of whom John testified, the very reason John was sent to baptize. This is He of whom they longed for: the Lord's Anointed, His Christ, His Messiah. And though John bore witness as his Baptism, John never tires of bearing witness to the Son of God.

So when he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" John came baptizing with water to foreshadow this cleansing flood, this Lamb of the Atonement upon whom the sins of the people were placed; this Passover Lamb who would shed His blood to protect His people from death. John spent his whole ministry preparing the people for this moment, and now He informs them that it is finally here. John delights in pointing to Jesus and saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Again the next day, Jesus was passing by and John proclaims, "Behold! The Lamb of God!" *This* man is the fulfillment of all God's promises through the prophets. Two of John's disciples get the message. So they leave John to follow Jesus, and Jesus notices. He turns and says to them, "What are you seeking?"

What a question! What are *you* seeking? What are *you* looking for when following Jesus? Are you looking for a guru? A miracle worker? A therapist? A mascot? A radical? A social justice warrior? Often people follow Jesus for a bit but then get bored or disappointed with Him and leave because He isn't what they expected. If you're seeking the fix for whatever you think ails you in this age, He will be a bit let down. But if you're seeking the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, you've come to the right place! So, best be honest with Him and yourself when He asks, "What are you seeking?"

The answer these two disciples of John give is interesting. They said to Him, "Rabbi, where are you staying?" By calling Him Rabbi, they showed what they wanted. John has brought them as far as he could. He has brought them to Jesus. Now they wanted to be with Jesus and learn from Him. As Luther said, they wanted to be in His company, hear Him, converse and associate with Him. They wanted to be with Him where He was.

Another church father, St. John Chrysostom, thought the implications of this answer were profound. He said, "Let us then also learn from now on to consider everything secondary to the importance of hearing the Word of God. ...Let food and baths and dinners and the other things of this world have their appointed time, but when it comes to the teaching of the heavenly wisdom, let every time be the right time. ...And yet how often do we portion out our time for trifles and unprofitable silly talking, and we sit together idly during the morning and afternoon, midday and evening besides, and we have appointed places for this; but hearing the divine doctrines two or three times in the week we become sick, and overstuffed." Ouch. And social media didn't even exist.

All Andrew and the other disciple wanted to do was be with Jesus, hear Him teach, and spend time in His presence. Jesus responds, "Come and you will see." Here we come upon a profound truth, the Christian faith isn't formed in us by merely reading this or that great book or studying hard some theological text. The Christian faith is literally formed in us in the time we spend with Jesus.

It was clear to Andrew and the other disciple how to do that. They asked Him, “Where are you staying,” or rather, “Where do you abide?” And at His invitation, they went and abided with Him. But abiding with Jesus is not just for a time long ago in a land far away. John later records the promise of Jesus, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we will come to Him and make our home, our abode, with him. Whoever does not love Me does not keep My words.”

If you want to be with Jesus, to hear Him and spend time in His presence, then you must spend time in His words, in the witness that John and the others wrote for you. Just as Christ was present for those first disciples in that abode, He stands ready to meet you always in His words. His invitation to you is the same, “Come and you will see.” Go, dwell in the Word with Him, and your eyes will open wide. He enlightens us through His Word and rids us of all the off-base notions we might have about Him.

Luther wrote, “He did not initiate His Kingdom with violence, with blustering, with open assault in the fashion of some mighty emperor...but He was friendly and mingled cordially with the people. ...He received all who came to Him, chatted with them, excluded no one from His company.” That’s the way Jesus welcomed Andrew and this other disciple, and they stayed with Him. And after having spent time with Jesus, after hearing His words, they believed.

Andrew’s joy at the time with Jesus was so great that there was no way he could keep it to himself. Chrysostom said, “Andrew, after having tarried with Jesus and learned what He did, did not keep the treasure to himself, but hastens and runs quickly to his brother to impart to him the good things that he had received.” Isn’t that wonderful? He runs to Simon, crying out, “At last! He’s here! We’ve found him, the Messiah!” Maybe Simon believed, or maybe he simply wanted to check out Jesus for himself, but however it happened, Andrew brought him to Jesus.

Andrew was able to bring Simon to Jesus because he knew where Jesus was to be found. He had been there himself. That is how he led his brother to that place, where his brother would be convinced, not by Andrew, but by Jesus Himself. That, too, is where we must be to bring others to the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. We must be in His presence. We must be in His Word, not just one or two or even three days of the week, but every day! And that, too, is where we must take others. For it is not our words that lead others to believe but the words of Jesus Himself.

So dwell with Jesus. Come to His Word and bring others to behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. For there, we abide in His presence, hear from Him, learn from Him, and are brought to see, the Lamb of God, who takes away your sin, my sin, and the sin of the whole world. Amen.