

What are you looking for? Come and See.

January 15, 2023: The Second Sunday after the Epiphany; MLK weekend

The Rev. Nick Morris-Kliment, Rector

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May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of all our hearts, be always acceptable in your sight, our Rock and our redeemer. Amen.

“What are you looking for?”

When I typed those words into Google just for fun, this is what came up, in order: What are you looking for in your next position?

What are you looking for in a relationship? What are you looking for in Spanish? What are you looking for in a man? What are you looking for in a job?

It is one of the most powerful questions that we can ask one another, and ourselves. What am I looking for? How we answer depends on our state of mind and context. It says something about the transitional nature of work in our time that the first answer up has to do with looking for the next job.

As I was writing this very sentence, the answer to that question was, ‘my phone,’ as I realized all of a sudden that I had to make an important phone call. All too often, I am looking for my phone.

Or perhaps we are in a dark place of fear or grief or confusion or anger, and our very reason for being, the very marrow of our existence, has been called into question.

I think it’s significant that they are the very first words that Jesus speaks in the Gospel of John: “What are you looking for?” That’s how important the question is in our life. Jesus is asking us what are our deepest desires and needs? Where do we find purpose? Meaning? Value?

Andrew and the other disciple who were tailing Jesus had a question of their own in response. “Where are you staying? They wanted to be with him. And Jesus’ response is: “Come and see.”

I think of a time in my life when I was desperately looking for peace of mind. I was in my mid 20s, a graduate student in history without much of a plan for the future, recently broken up with a woman I thought I might marry; in retrospect also clinically depressed... I was in a local choir and the director, having heard some of my questions and some of my woes invited me to her Episcopal Church.

“Come and see,” she said.

I hadn’t been to church in decades. My family weren’t church go-ers. I had not been baptized. The closing blessing that morning of my first visit was this: “May the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his son Jesus Christ.” That blessing sucked me in like a riptide at the beach. Peace of God? I am looking for that.

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Six months later I was baptized. Four years later I quit graduate school. Fifteen years later, I was ordained. While I can't say I haven't been anxious or depressed since then, I can say that I have in Jesus a place to put my heart when I become anxious and depressed.

Who knows what can happen when we say to someone, "Come and see?"

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All of us are here because someone invited us. It may have been by a person acting as an agent of the Holy Spirit. It may have been the Holy Spirit directly, as she nudged us to walk through our door because "Something I'm looking for is there."

Understandably, initially, and importantly, it is about us. But notice that is not where it stops in the Gospel passage. After Andrew accepts Jesus' invitation and stays with him, he goes to find his brother Simon, and invites him to meet Jesus.

Epiphany is about the manifestation of Jesus to the world, in wider and wider circles. John's Gospel is particularly insistent on describing this pattern. Jesus speaks to someone's deepest needs. And then that person brings other people to meet Jesus. As followers of Jesus, who lead our lives by answering Jesus' "come and see question," there is more. It doesn't stop with us.

Jesus' question becomes larger. It's not just "what are you looking for?" but for us it must become, "what is our/my neighbor looking for?" It becomes not just, "How is God loving me," but "How am I loving my neighbor?" How do we say to our neighbor, "Come and see?" How do we look out for and love our neighbor?

On this date in 1929, Martin Luther King Jr, was born. He would have celebrated his 94th birthday, today, January 15th. Tomorrow, we mark that day as a nation. For thirty-seven years, the 3rd Monday in January has been celebrated as a national holiday, honoring The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

If I playfully imagine King in the place of the two disciples in the Gospel today, I imagine this: King is following after Jesus, wondering, "Who is this man?" and wondering what his own purpose is, how to respond to the passion for Civil Rights that is bubbling up within the black community. Jesus turns and asks King - what are you looking for? King responds, "How do I lead this people in accordance with your will?" Jesus says, "Come stay with me, and see."

So, King abides with Jesus in the riches of the Black church, takes the counsel of the elders, buttressed by the courage, faith, and action of countless women and men; King abides with Jesus in non-violent, compassionate love for the so-called enemy. And changes the world.

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But for King, it wasn't just about Civil Rights for his people, just the way it isn't just about what we are looking for when we come and see about Jesus. King expanded his concern to include "What is *my neighbor* looking for? What does *my neighbor* need?"

And so, King's work came to include speaking out against the Vietnam War and its catastrophic effect on the Vietnamese people and on the mostly poor and working-class families of all colors in this country who bore the brunt of the fighting. His concern widened to include not just a struggle for civil rights for black people, but for poor people and workers everywhere without a voice and without power to stand up against the exploitations of capitalism.

King took Jesus' "Come and see" and multiplied it into a dream that was for all people. We'll here various pieces of that famous speech tomorrow.

That is our calling too. To see beyond ourselves. To invite people to come and see what life at Christ Church is like. To join us in loving God and neighbor as Jesus teaches. To see if abiding with Jesus and us in the community of the Church is part of their answer to "What are you looking for?"

"Come and see." It is a most gracious invitation that has been offered to us by Jesus, who is patient with our foibles and uncertainties, our misguided striving and mistakes, who is the beginning and end of all that we could ever want or need. It's ok with him if we don't understand that yet. Come and see, come and figure it out together, with me, he says. Come and see.

Amen.