

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



January 8, 2023

INVITE

Andrew's simple invitation

by Drew Downs

There's a fascinating humility to the portrayal of John the Baptist in the Gospel of John. He knows his place in the event. Which is both courageous and self-aware.

And when he points out Jesus to two of his own disciples, they ditch him. Not so much like an upgrade, but as closer to the heart of the matter. As in, if he is the Messiah, of course we'd go and follow him? Like, isn't that the most obvious option?

One of those disciples, Andrew, makes the next obvious and logical leap. *I have found the Messiah, so I should tell my brother about it. Of course he'd want to know.*

Many of us shrink at the idea of asking people about *personal* things. But Andrew doesn't see this as personal or public. He sees it as important. Important enough for John to tell him. And important enough to tell his brother.

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

2023

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Evangelism in 2023

Reading about John the Baptist and Andrew the Apostle this week certainly sets a tone. It's hard to read this week's gospel and not think about how easy it seems to be for them. Here's the Messiah? OK! And yet many of us shrink at the opportunities we have to share the Good News with others. Some even flat out refuse to participate in evangelism.

The main reason, I contend, is that it isn't so much evangelism, as the narrow vision of evangelism we have learned from our neighbors. A vision that can be both coercive and literal. Like proclaiming the Good News means literally quoting the Bible at people.

The older, broader understanding of evangelism is simply sharing with others what is life-giving to us. Not *for the purpose of* recruiting for our team, but to invite them into something that could give them life, too.

I suspect we've always gotten this mixed up. Because evangelism sounds like recruitment to Team Jesus. And naturally we want to recruit to Team Episcopal Church. But recruitment isn't the principle character of evangelism. Sharing is.

It certainly was easier to *share* our vision of Jesus half a century ago. At least in the sense that most people were already *recruited*. On the other hand, I suspect fewer people experience genuine, heartfelt sharing these days. Which is something each of us can do.

With love,
Drew

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

2023

FOR SUNDAY

The Second Sunday After the Epiphany

January 15, 2023

Collect

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

From John 1:29-42

"He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah""

Reflection

We are now into the season after the Epiphany. A time in which we *look* for what God is doing in our world. An idea that at once seems both passive and active.

Look is a verb, isn't it? It's an action! So looking is active. It also seems a lot like waiting for something to happen.

This is because the work of being open, watching, and anticipating the work of God is essentially reactive. You are doing something, but it is in anticipation of doing *something else later*.

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

It reminds me of the midwives attending to Rose when she was giving birth to our daughter. They were just sitting in the next room. Rose was laboring away and they were sitting there, rocking in chairs, knitting hats.

Except, of course, that they weren't just sitting. Or just knitting. They were actively listening and anticipating what was going to happen.

It was such an odd experience. Each moment felt important and serious to me. And they seemed passive and uncaring. But every time I checked with them, they just smiled and said, she's coming along just fine. And yet, they could also tell when it was time to move or change positions. And when she was getting close to delivery.

John prepared for the coming of Jesus by proclaiming the Good News of his coming, preaching repentance, and baptizing people in the river. And yet, as we were reminded last week, even John was surprised at the opportunity to baptize *him*. It felt backward.

Then after the Messiah *does* arrive, things change for John, don't they? His work also has to change. He was anticipating a Messiah who was going to arrive. And now that the Messiah has arrived, his message, for one, has to change. Slightly.

We also see that his followers change. Which can't be good for John's ego, can it? He could choose to see it as if they are abandoning him, like its a competition. Or he could recognize that they're all there to serve. And he gets to show them.

And then, one of his followers becomes one of Jesus's first disciples, Andrew. Who invites *his* brother to meet the Messiah.

Every bit of this is active. We are similarly called to multiple kinds of active participation in this divine project.

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