



Rev Diana Rattray
Come and See
Epiphany 2
Isaiah 49:1-7
John 1:29-42
15 January 2023

When the disciples of John the Baptist, seek Jesus out, he does not give them a sermon or even a proclamation.

He asks a question. What are you looking for? If we go back to the original Greek it could just as easily be translated as What are you seeking? What are you hoping to find?

As we return to work and routine at the beginning of a new year it is a good time to take stock and to think about those questions and invitation and our response to them.

We live in a world where the question what do you want or what are you looking for is heard in light of consumerism. What do you need?- a new car, a flat screen tv, some anti-aging skin enhancing cream, the latest music, or paid to view tv series or sports package.

We all know deep down that the outwards things we “need” are not going to meet our deep or spiritual needs. They may satisfy for a short time, they may entertain but they do not meet our deepest yearnings. They are not what are best for all in society.

This holiday season has been difficult for many who have had plans scuppered by Covid infections and/or the weather. Others are struggling to find enough to cover the increasing costs of basic food and accommodation. I am finding that there is a deep sense of dissatisfaction for many and it is manifesting itself in a myriad of ways, outbursts, violence, withdrawal, loss of hope.

Places like St Matthew-in-the-City are beacons of hope. Places where people gravitate to sit, to listen to music, to farewell love ones, to celebrate love.

A place of stillness – in which we can reconnect with ourselves and the small still voice of God.

There is also often a need for real face to face connection with family members or friends. Loneliness and isolation are part of the scourge of our society. Even young people may “feel” connected via social media but remain deeply alone and isolated.

Perhaps what we need is hope and courage when news events inspire fear and despair.

In her book “The Time Is Now: A Call to Uncommon Courage Sister Joan Chittester, a Benedictine nun, and activist in the US

Reflects on the world being a landmine of difference.

I quote: “The direction we take at this new crossroad in time will not simply affect the future of the United States. It will determine the history of the world. The future depends on whether we make serious decisions about our own roles in shaping a future that fulfils God’s will for the world, or simply choose to suffer the decisions made by others intent on imposing their own vision of tomorrow.

This moment is a daunting one. At every crossroad, every one of us has three possible options: The first choice is to quit a road that is going somewhere we do not want to go. We can move in another direction. We can distance ourselves from the difficulties of it all. We can leave the mission unfinished. The second alternative is to surrender to the forces of resistance that obstruct our every step toward wholeness. We can succumb to the fatigue of the journey that comes from years of being ignored, ridiculed, or dismissed for our ideas. We can go quietly into oblivion, taking on the values of the day or going silent in the face of them. This choice, in other words, is to crawl into a comfortable cave with nice people and become a church, a culture, a society within a society. We can just hunker down together and wait for the storm to calm down, go by, and become again the nice warm womb of our beginnings.

The third choice is to refuse to accept a moral deterioration of the present and insist on celebrating the coming of an unknown, but surely holier, future. The third choice is to go on steadfastly, even if we are not sure what we will find at the end of it. The third choice is to follow the path of the prophets of old. It is to echo those who came before us who spoke the voice and vision of God for the world. It is to risk, as the prophets did, not really being heard at all—at least not until long after the fact.¹

Food for thought for us in Aotearoa New Zealand as we enter an election year.

After Jesus asked the question what are you looking for? The disciples responded with Rabbi, where are you staying?

And Jesus' response was an invitation.

Come and see.

Come and see was more than to come and check out what sort of house he was staying in. Come and see was an invitation to slow down, to take time, to sit, to listen, to eat, to get relational. To think deeply.

When that occurred, Andrew was able to realise that he was in the presence of the Messiah. It was then that he was able to go out and invite his brother to come and meet Jesus too.

As we gather this Sunday the Eucharist feeds and nourishes us.

Through word, symbol, music, action, bread we are fed by the Lamb of God.

When the disciples respond to Jesus' question with a further question – where are you staying? what they want to know is where they can come and simply be with him.

Often when I meet people who come off the street into church buildings like St Matthews and they ask a question of faith. I suspect many are just wanting someone to listen to them and to hear some of their story. To even get to know them by name.

¹ <https://joanchittister.org/-/joanchit/word-from-joan/direction-we-take> *The Time Is Now: A Call to Uncommon Courage*

We do not need the answers to questions of faith. What we need is the time and willingness to offer an invitation to come and see. To be willing to follow through where the question may lead.

A simple and relational invitation to others seeking something more than wider society has to offer. Come and see.

Jesus' invitation is really that simple: "come and see." It's non-threatening. It's clear, it's inherently relational. It can also be intellectual and deep, but it doesn't have to be.

John declares Jesus as being the Lamb Of God who is taking away the sin of the world, inviting us to live an alternative to all that destroys life and relationship.

I finish with the words of prayer found in the NZ Prayerbook as part of the service of midday prayer. (Pluralised).

Lead us from death to life,
from falsehood to truth;
lead us from despair to hope,
from fear to trust;
lead us from hate to love,
from war to peace.
Let peace fill our hearts,
our world, our universe.²

Amen.

² (NZPB/HKMoA p 164 <https://anglicanprayerbook.nz/147.html>)