



Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

Second Sunday after Epiphany

January 15, 2017

A Chain of Witnesses

John 1:29-42

Just a moment on the setting; still at the Jordan as Jesus is baptized. Recalling that last week we remembered that John had tried to stop Jesus from being baptized. He clearly believed that it ought to be the other way around---"I need to be baptized by you" was near a confession of faith.

Now a different narrative from John the Evangelist. This written some 60 years after the death of Jesus and it begin to sound like a pattern of evangelical witness that their might be a chain of witnesses for those who believe, trust, and confess that Jesus is the Way into the Truth that is Life.

So, a prayer....."Most gracious One, in Jesus you became one with us that we might become one with you. Open our understanding anew, give us wisdom to discern our place in the plan, and send us to tell others with the simple words 'Come and see.' In Jesus' name, Amen!"

Feeling DiscipleFIT, physically sound, mentally sharp, spiritually sound and growing discipleship. I am glad for the challenge from our Communications Committee to sharpen our memories and knowledge of Scripture. You are what you memorize and I am glad to participate in the adventure with the Word of God, a Lamp unto our Feet!

AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH, ONE OF US,
AND LIVED AMONG US AND WE HAVE SEEN AND BELIEVED HIS GLORY,
THE GLORY AS OF A FATHER'S ONLY SON,
FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH. (after John 1:14)

What in the world are you, are we, to make of that passage? It is critical and central to our theology. That God is not a distant "maybe," Or, "God out there who doesn't care." This intimacy is one of sheer grace that reaches into our humanity and insures a God who is present, "God with us," to redeem and to set us free to witness, called to serve.

The Gospel writer sets the pace"

1. John appears...from God..."came for testimony...to bear witness to the light."
2. John keeps saying, "This is the one "who comes after me...ranks before me...he was before me."
3. Crowds come out to John, the priests come and ask "Who are you?" He confessed, did not deny, confessed, "I am not the Christ." "A voice crying in the wilderness" to prepare the way. That all in the first day!

4. Day 2. John with two of his disciples. See Jesus and says, "Look, the Lamb of God." The two follow. Chain of witness begins...
5. Jesus first words, we have been waiting for them, are "Who are you seeking? What are you looking for?" "Teacher, where are you staying?" Literally, "Where are you abiding?" "Come and See! It seems that is the key. The invite after the witness!
6. They came and saw and stayed! True students stick to it! One was named "Andrew."
7. Andrew finds his brother. Went to Simon Peter and witnessed saying "We have found the Messiah." (May have been the Messiah actually found them all!)
8. Andrew brought his brother to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John, Called 'Cephas', Peter." No introduction necessary!
9. On Day 3, the next verses, Jesus heads to Galilee and found Philip, who found Nathaniel. And they all came to confess that this Jesus was Messiah, the Son of God, Savior of all!

From this faithful chain of witnesses, we are the rest of the story being told and shared that the world might believe that Jesus is the One who makes all things new.

Today, what are we to make of our part in this story of salvation?

1956. A different time and place as the Holy Spirit led a faithful 70 or so saints to plot to build a congregation in Eastgate. From simple beginnings at the Hilltop Inn, they marked a place where they trusted that God would guide them to build a community of Lutherans. There was some risk. This was, more or less, a dead end street on a quiet community a lake away from the real city; a city of strawberry fields.

Those who wrote and tell the story spoke of the challenges and opportunities that led them forward and deeper into discipleship-like trust that with each other they would remain a workshop of the Holy Spirit and lighthouse of the Gospel.

Out of the Center the circle expanded into what is now one of fastest growing cities in the Puget Sound. In the midst of growth and change, traffic and density, and incredible diversity in every sense of the word.

We are at the intersection of the cities, a little like the trade routes of Asia Minor that led to the incredible growth of the Christian communities to and within which John wrote a Gospel.

So, we gather, to encourage, to be equipped with the Word and confidence of the Spirit, that we might continue to be sent as witnesses like those first few to believed that in Jesus they were in the True Life.

And the questions of the past two weeks must inform our faithful response to the call to discipleship:

1. "How are you about growth in discipleship?" Where is your part, your place of growth and service in our congregation? To place our lives on the line and chain of witness is the call of Christ. Specifically, where is Jesus finding you? Where are you with Jesus?
2. "How do you share Jesus with others?" Who do you invite into the life and ministry of our faith community?

I believe that our Gospel portion sets a pattern for our congregation, for you, for me in times of both challenge and opportunity.

Did you sense the power of persistence? John kept witnessing and confessing and his followers become deeply connected to Jesus. Persistence in witness leads to joy in sharing and connection in caring! Those are hallmarks of this congregation.

Did you sense the power of the common confession? Lamb of God. Messiah. Son of God. Savior. Lord, Friends. And, as friend once wrote "Name of the tip of the tongue forever." The One who calls us to engagement in His words and truth.

Did you see the results? The band of believers grew and the power of the community began to turn the world right side up. A mission of sowing, growing, knowing that our lives are in sync with God.

And we all know, we all sense that **THE KEY TO RENEWAL IS THE ENGAGEMENT OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN COMMUNITY.** The fastest growth of the Gospel in the world is when our Christ-Kinship shines the light of love into darkness of our own hearts, that as those reconciled in Christ, we are one people becoming a tsunami of graceful enfolding “enriched in him, strengthened,...”not lacking in any spiritual gift.” And here is Paul’s challenge: “God is faithful; by him you are called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Beloved, I hope you are ALL IN...into the work we share discipleFIT, in a time to DEEPEN, RENEW, AND ENGAGE.

Be challenged! Be faithful! God is about to do a new things in our time and we are a part of the adventure in the great chain of witnesses.

The Cross of Christ, on our brow at the “Jordan of the Font” as we are named and claimed “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Amen.