

Baptism Homily, January 19th, Second Sunday of Epiphany.  
Isaiah 49:1-7; John 1:29-46.

*With thanks for inspiration for some of this sermon, from 'The Bible in One Year' Commentary by Nicky Gumbel.*

Two points - **Staying with Jesus. Pointing to Jesus.**

### **Staying with Jesus.**

Jesus decides to leave Galilee. He finds Philip and says 'Follow me'. The Greek word used for follow, means not only to 'walk in the footsteps of' or walk in the dust' as we have said before in services. The greek word also means 'to accompany, to be with them.' Jesus says, to Phillip - accompany me, be with me.

Andrew and the anonymous other disciple, are following Jesus. They ask 'where are you staying?' Greek word for 'staying' is the same one Jesus uses in John 15 - when teaching at the Last Supper - Abide / Remain in me and I will abide / remain in you. They ask where Jesus is abiding, staying. And what did Andrew and the other disciple do: 'they spend that day with him.' They abided / stayed with him and he abided / stayed with them. Jesus invites each of us to accompany him, to be with him, to a deep personal relationship with him, to abide with him. The Devil has great interest in stopping that from happening. To distract you, to fill you live with things, stuff, activities, things that seem good and important at the time, in order to stop that abiding to happen.

Andrew stays with Jesus, and then when he returns, it says "the first thing he did was find his brother and tell him." That time with Jesus, it inspired him, it filled him up. Out of the overflow, he acted.

We talked about our journey, this coming year, to get closer to Jesus - the king of kings. And we said, this could be perhaps growing in knowledge or perhaps it was simply putting into practice what we know. Part of our chosen journey for this year may simply be - "I am going to choose to set aside time to be with the Lord." Someone wonderfully said to me this week - "I could spend 30 mins in bed, or I could get up, spend that time with Jesus and he will give me more energy than I would have got through sleep." Maybe spending time with Jesus, means a digital fast. If it is a distraction, then fast from your phone / tablet whatever. Switch it off. It will switch back on don't worry. Fast for the Lord...

So a question. How is your weekly pattern of being with the Lord. What place or methods, work for you? This is a huge area I know. Just over a year ago, the home groups used some material, called Sacred Pathways, which helped us think about the different ways we draw near to the Lord. It could be through creation, through celebration and music, through intellectual means, through liturgy and tradition, through our senses, perhaps through solitude and silence to name a few. If you'd like to know more, I'd suggest you ask some of the home group members or chat to Ron Westerbeek or John Harris. So what helps you?

But secondly the pattern. A testimony I think I may have told here. Phil Pusey was leader of Youth for Christ in Burton - where I did my curacy. Awesome team and great work. Phil preached at our wedding. Godly man. You know he was one of the men who you just saw loved Jesus and *I was sure*, he had it all sorted in his daily walk with Christ. But you know he said once. Him and his wife Mari had three great but lively children at the time. Home demands meant he just couldn't get the quality time with Jesus daily. The challenge of being a Dad and doing the whole parenting thing together. So he decided, once a week, he'd go into work early, before the team came in, to spend quality time with Jesus. To

abide with him. To deepen that personal intimate relationship Jesus invited him to have. To make sure, in his busy chaotic life, to have that quality time once a week. So I share that testimony to simply ask - how, what method, and in what way can you spend quality time with Jesus regularly?

So out of that time, things flow in Andrew and flow out from him to others.

### **Pointing others to Jesus**

Jesus gives us, his followers, the opportunity to do what John the Baptist does - to point others to him. That is a core idea, I'd say the heart, of what a godparent is about, pointing Esther to Jesus. Of course, God could choose differently, God does not need human agents. But he chooses to. Jesus could continue his ministry without us. The legions of angels he commands, could be sent like Gabriel, out to speak to anyone and everyone. Done dusted. The world has heard.

Yet he doesn't.

Yet he uses his disciples to call people.

They bring people they know, to Jesus

John the Baptist introduces two of his own disciples, Andrew and another one - sometimes believed to be John the Gospel writer.

Andrew introduces his brother Peter

Philip introduces his friend Nathanael.

Nathanael was suspicious as we heard yet he came, he listened, he saw, he found and declared that Jesus was the king of Israel and the Son of God.

At All Saints, we talk about, Up, In, Out. It is printed on the inside page. These are a summary of the core values we want to be reflected in our congregation. But not only in our congregation but in our individual lives, as we can see these elements in Jesus own

life - Upward to his heavenly father, inward, sharing life with his followers, outward to God's broken, damaged world. A balanced set of values which we pray will grow within Esther and each of us. OUT we talk about it being about 'service of others', and 'evangelism'. But when we mention evangelism, we may often think of two people - if not Billy Graham - we think of Peter or Paul. We think of evangelism being direct or confrontational, and preaching to people, like Peter; or it is intellectual, debating, apologetics, arguing, complicated points of faith - like Paul. But those are just two evangelism styles I'd suggest we see in scripture. We also see other ways faith is shared. There is Dorcas - Acts 9 - a disciple who seems to have communicated her faith through serving others primarily. There is testimony like the man born blind. He cannot answer the Pharisees But he happily talks about what Jesus has done in his life. There is also Matthew. Matthew who after discovering who Jesus is, it says he had a party and invited his friends, where they met and heard from Jesus. You kind of imagine him saying, 'come and see a man'. And there is the Samaritan woman - who after that encounter with Jesus at the well, goes back into her village. Does she sit down and think and chew it over. It says - "Then leaving her water jar, the woman went back into town and said to the people "come and see a man who told me everything I ever did, could this be the Christ?" and the people came. *Inviting* people so they can meet Jesus is a form of evangelism. Now he is not physically here, but he is present by his Spirit. And we consider to what we can invite people so they have a chance to understand more of who he is and to encounter him. To an Alpha. To a worship service like this.

Invitation is something any can do. But for some here, invitation may be a style of evangelism which is our SHAPE, it somehow connects with our personality, abilities, gifts. Just like Direct like Peter, Intellectual like Paul, testimonial like the man born blind,

service of others like Dorcas, may be the main SHAPE of our evangelism.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, over 75 years ago, William Temple, wrote a biblical commentary on John. When he came to the words in v43: "And he brought him to Jesus." Archbishop Temple wrote: "The greatest service one person can do to another." Simon Peter went on, to be one of the most significant influences in the history of Christianity, one of the great Christian leaders. You may not be able to do what Peter did. But you CAN do what his brother did - you can bring someone to Jesus.

Just like Philip. You can say "come and see" to your friends, family, work colleagues. You can be part of God's plan for people to hear about and respond to Jesus, through inviting them. That is basically what we are doing when we invite people to Alpha. Because of what we have discovered and know in our faith, we invite people to come and see - hear about Jesus and what it means to be a follower of his, and make up your mind.

There has been much media attention on the Royals in the UK in the past two weeks. Queen Elizabeth II is the longest reigning British monarch. She is a committed Christian. In my home in N.Ireland, it was a tradition, not to be broken, Christmas dinner had to be done by 3pm to hear the Queen's Christmas message. In 2016 in her message she pointed to another kingdom, not her own, a kingdom Jesus came to establish and which he will come again to rule. She said.

"Billions of people now follow his teaching and find in him the guiding light for their lives. I am one of them."

Then just over a year ago in her Christmas message she said:

"Only a few acknowledged Jesus when he was born. Now billions follow him. The message of Jesus is never out of date and is needed as much as ever." (2018 address).

Andrew discovered him. He knew Peter needed him. Phillip discovered him and knew Nathanael needed him.  
Come and see they said.

So. Staying with Jesus. Abiding with him. Choosing a way. Choosing a regular pattern of time.

Pointing to Jesus. Each of will express this differently. Invitation we all can do, as Andrew and Nathanael did. The rest we leave in God's hands but we do it for we know the message and person of Jesus is never out of date and is needed as much as ever.

Shall we pray.

"Lord thank you that you are the Lamb who takes away my sins and you offer me the gift of forgiveness. Thank you for your invitation to stay with you, to abide with you. Help me to take that invitation from you Lord. And also help me also to introduce others to you, to invite people to 'come and see.' Amen.