

Readings

Isaiah 49:1-7

John 1:29-42

Testify

In this time of Epiphany we consider what it is to look to the light. The scriptures this week return to the baptism of Jesus but rather than focussing on the story of the baptism John focusses on pointing to the light - "Behold the lamb of God." John shows us what it is to testify to the light as he points us to Jesus.

Pointing to Jesus is the whole purpose of Johns ministry. So much so that 'sin' in the book of John is not recognizing who Jesus is. That is why the first thing that happens after John points to Jesus is two disciples recognize him. We are given the formula for finding the light. John points; the disciples recognize and they follow; and then they point to the light "we have found the messiah" says Andrew. which translates "we have found the anointed one."

Once they see Jesus for who he is they are invited on the Journey with him. Jesus doesn't demand something of them he invites them to "come and see" what it is to live in the light.

One author writes "John the Baptist didn't know all the details as he stared intensely into the eyes of Jesus. But (it seems) he knew that this was the Messiah, the long awaited one...(Or at least he knew there was something profoundly different about Jesus) "Behold the lamb of God" was not a cute phrase, an idle remark, but a recognition that Jesus was to become the "suffering servant" Messiah so vividly described by the prophet Isaiah. Jesus would become the living human expression of God's unlimited love... (Although these words were likely added in after the actual event by those who heard and/or experienced it - the profound experienced moved the community to act and follow this anointed one).

Now, John had some prior experience of Jesus, but Andrew didn't know any of this when he left John to follow Jesus. He just sensed that this was the right thing to do, so much so that he brought his brother Peter to meet Jesus." I wonder if Peter had any idea of what might lay ahead when he responded to Jesus' invitation. He must have been puzzled about what Jesus meant when he changed his name to "the rock".

This passage made we wonder a little what does it mean to be called? John had history with Jesus from before they were born, he was clearly called from the womb to testify to the light. But Andrew and Peter they knew little of Jesus and immediately they were called to follow, disciple and testify. Peter was called and named immediately changing his name to the rock of the church -he was obviously called and chosen. But what of Andrew? We don't know a lot

about him as a disciple but wasn't his role essential? Isn't he the one who pointed Peter to Jesus in the first place? To be called looks different for each of us.

As I was preparing my sermon I was reminded that this week in the U.S. the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. is celebrated. (We were also reminded of that on the crowded ski hill yesterday - being that the U.S. actually takes a day off to remember this modern day prophet). Martin Luther King Jr is an example of a man who was called, and testified to the light. One author suggested that King was a little like Peter. Called as a young preacher in Montgomery Alabama King was called upon to be a rock for the civil rights movement.

After the arrest of Rosa Parks in Dec. 1955 Martin was asked to lead a bus boycott. And from his significant influence and leadership he was then elected the president of the newly formed Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the vanguard of the nonviolent struggle for justice in the South.

King "was spit upon, ridiculed, jailed, fire-bombed, yet he kept on moving -- across the South, then on to Washington for his famous "I Have a Dream" in August of 1963, and then to Oslo, Norway, where he was hailed by the world as the Nobel Peace Prize recipient for 1964. And yet he was not honored and hailed by all "The closer he got to Washington, the more dangerous he became to those in power.

Dr. King left that moment of glory in Oslo and responded to God's call to become an even bolder prophet for justice and peace. His vision and struggle was expanded to include all victims of poverty and violence. It was his "Poor People's Campaign" headed toward Washington and his condemnation of the war in Vietnam that probably led to the fatal bullets on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis on April 4, 1968. Dr. King didn't know his commitment to justice and peace would make him a (Victim) but he embraced the call from to live his faith as fully as he could, each day, no matter where it would lead.

But today is not about the end of ministry it is about call and testimony perhaps the place most of us feel we are at in faith, and discipleship.

I like the person of Andrew in today's scripture because like him most days I want to know a little more before I fully accept the next step of the call. "Show me where you live," Andrew asks Jesus, wanting to see how and where he lives. "What kind of a life are we talking about here, Jesus?", we can hear Andrew asking. Well, the life of Jesus and the life of his first followers and his more recent followers like Martin Luther King, show us that" awareness and recognition of God at work are firstly important and then we are called a testimony like that of John, Andrew, Peter and Martin.

I think we miss out on an essential piece of our faith when we leave out the part about pointing to the light. We are called to be witnesses to God's love for all the world. It seems to me that to point to the light we have to do, or say something.

When you vocalize something sometimes it makes it more real. Think about it this way:

- If you think you love someone that is good and well but if you tell someone you love them, or they tell you they love you - it makes it more real - or at least it is now out in the open and you can respond more completely to it. You can share the experience with one another.
- Or what about when you see something beautiful. Just ask Carol - one of the reasons I like to ski with someone else is because all day long I have to comment on the beauty of the mountains, and the landscape, and the rush of the wind, and the feel of the snow, and the adrenaline of the ride down the slope. It is one of the reasons I feel skiing for me can be a spiritual experience because when I am out there I have to proclaim and testify to the gift of life and creation that God has given us. (I'm the same way when I'm out on the sailboat, or hiking in the forest). And if I have to keep it all in the experience isn't the same for me.
- And what of justice and compassion. It's one thing to see or know about an injustice it is a whole other thing to speak to it. To raise your actions and voice to it. What if Martin Luther King Jr. had kept what was breaking his heart, soul and people to himself. North America would look very different today.

In September I recall asking some folks to come and be with me and share parts of their faith and church community journey. I heard from you that it was powerful to hear from your 'own' people. I heard from those who spoke that it meant a lot to their faith and life to publicly verbalize the impact God, church and faith had on them. Our lives are changed as we testify to the light.

What does it mean to be called? It is going to mean something different to each one of us. What does it mean to testify? That too will be different for each one. What does it mean to live in the light? It means we recognize and react to the call of God on our life and from there we will testify to the light of life.

May we all live my fully in the light of our call to life each and every day.