

2 Epiphany January 15, 2023

Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, **“What are you looking for?”** Andrew and the other disciple said, “Rabbi, teacher, where are you staying?” Jesus replied **“Come and see”** or **“Come and you will see.”** As we hear this first conversation between Jesus and Andrew and another disciple, at least in some ways, it does **not** feel like a conversation we might have today.

Let’s unpack this a bit. John the Baptizer has very recently baptized Jesus. As Rev’d Jerry shared with us last Sunday, John has witnessed the naming, claiming and affirming of Jesus as the Son of God, the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. John has always claimed his **ONLY** role to be the one who prepares the way for the Lord. I can imagine that if I were the one who baptized Jesus, I’d be working to gain some publicity from it. “Hey, you guys missed it last week. I baptized Jesus!”

Audrey West notes, “To many North American ears, John’s refusal to claim his own status is almost laughable. Hasn’t he heard about the need for good self-esteem or the importance of tooting one’s own horn? If John the Baptist had a social-networking page, every response to a comment from his friends would be something like, “Go on over to the Lamb’s place.”

There is definitely a lesson there for me. Perhaps for you too. Knowing Jesus involves pointing others to him and serving them.

When the two disciples ask Jesus where he is staying, you may think Jesus might have said, “Well, I was born in Bethlehem. We moved to Egypt when I was a toddler and then back to my mom’s home town of Nazareth. My father was a carpenter. I’ve just recently moved here to Bethany. I’m planning on going on a 40-day retreat into the wilderness.” Yeah, no. The disciples have acknowledged Jesus as Rabbi, teacher. Their question, Jillian Englehardt states, is acknowledgement that he is a rabbi, so it is about sitting at his feet as it were, learning from him. Jesus’ response is both invitational and gracious, **“Come and see.”** No pressure, no arm-twisting. No coercing.

This conversation and interaction take place at four in the afternoon. Why does the writer of this gospel give us that detail? I will say this: If that wasn’t important, it would not be included in this passage. The day is drawing to a close, but Jesus’ response has both a gentleness and an invitational spirit. We are told that the disciples “remained with him that day”. We are not told that they spent the night; “that day” means ending at sunset. In those two or perhaps three hours that they are with Jesus, their lives are changed for ever and for eternity. Andrew’s response is to bring his brother Simon to meet Jesus, whom he identifies as the Messiah, that is, the Anointed, the Christ. We have some sense of how important a person’s name was in the Hebrew culture. Upon meeting Simon, Jesus speaks to who he is and who he is to become.

You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas” which is translated Peter. Cephas, in Aramaic, means stone or rock. Jesus has chosen a name for Simon that has never been a name for a person before. Peter will become the rock of the church. These passages are full of so much grace:

John's acknowledgement of Jesus as the Lamb of God, Jesus' humility in insisting on being baptized by John, John sending "his own" disciples to Jesus, Jesus making himself available to the disciples late in the afternoon. Andrew bringing his brother Simon to Jesus. Grace upon grace upon grace.

Ninety-four years ago today, that is in 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia, Martin Luther King, Jr. was born. Tomorrow, we will honor his life, his tireless work towards the reconciliation of people of all races, work that ultimately cost him his life. As a white man, I will not pretend to grasp the battles, the threats, the hate, the jailing that this man went through. This man who never raised his fist or spoke from a place of hate. This disciple of Jesus and leader of people who, under the harshest conditions, exhibited grace upon grace upon grace.

There are many streets in the United States that have been named in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King. St. Augustine can make claim that Dr. King actually stayed on our street named for him, at the home of Janie and Robert Jones, 156 Martin Luther King Avenue, then known as Central Avenue. Janie Price is known as the Housemother of the Civil Rights Movement. She opened her home to Dr. King and Ralph Abernathy. College students would spend the night, sleeping on her floor or sofa, and then she would feed them breakfast, all the while under the threat of violence from the local KKK. When they left, they would be arrested for peacefully protesting, go to jail, bond out and return the following weekend to do it again. She worked as a nurse at Flagler Hospital until she discovered that her salary as a Registered Nurse was lower than less skilled workers who were white. Her manager told her if she didn't like it, she could leave. **She did.** She then went into private duty nursing and also worked as a public health nurse. When segregationists turned her white Buick upside down while she worked, she had it turned back over. She then drove through all of St. Augustine to let everyone know that she would not be intimidated. Gail Philips of the Lincolnville Museum described her as sweet and as feisty. Janie Young Price, respectfully known by many as Miss Janie, died Friday, January 6. She was 96.

St. Augustine historian David Nolan states that for her work in nursing, she became known as the Florence Nightingale of St. Johns County. She served both black and white families including many who had bitterly opposed her work in the civil rights struggle.

I would not be telling you about Janie Price if it weren't for St. Cyprian's member Gail Wisler who brought the story of this remarkable woman to my attention. Thank you, Gail. For Gail and her husband Bill Brown, Janie Price was all these things. She was also a beloved friend. Here are Gail and Bill's own words:

When we first moved to Lincolnville 20 years ago, we met Janie Price, and we knew we were home! She welcomed us with open arms and an open heart, and we've been good friends ever since! At that time, Janie was still able to get around easily and was frequently seen bee-bopping around, looking in on someone who was ill, or checking on a newborn baby. She loved babies! Janie looked out for us, and we looked out for her. She also loved dogs, and our rambunctious Labrador loved every chance to be with her. Her kindness, inner strength, intelligence, sense of humor and delightful laugh will live in our minds and hearts always.

Let us place ourselves in this morning's gospel passage.

Jesus asks us, “What are you looking for?” Now that is a question that we could spend a long time answering, and for each of us the answer would probably be different. That is your homework assignment! As we are drawn to Jesus, we want to know where we can find him. Where does Jesus stay, dwell, live? Where is he present?

Jesus has told us he goes to be with the Father. So, he is with the Father.

He has told us that where two or three are gathered in his name, he is there. So he is among us.

We will receive communion this morning; we believe Jesus is present in the bread and the wine. So, he is present in these simple elements that are made sacred..

Now I ask you to turn in your bulletin to the section that is for use during the sermon. These sentences are taken from our Baptismal Covenant, page 305 in the Book of Common Prayer. Please respond as you are led. If you are not baptized, I hope this gives you a window into part of what baptism means to this beloved community.

Celebrant Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

People I will, with God’s help.

Celebrant Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

People I will, with God’s help.

Celebrant Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

People I will, with God’s help.

Look at that second covenantal question. Jesus is “in all persons”. Jesus has told us this: **in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did it to me.** In a beautiful mystery that is way beyond my ability to explain to you, Jesus is present in each of us. All persons. Not just those who have been baptized. Not just Episcopalians. Not just Christians. All persons. Y’all means all.

When we get it that Jesus is in all persons, we will be led to proclaim the Good News of God in Christ. We will strive for justice and peace among all people – WITH GOD’S HELP.

I never met Dr. King. I never spoke with Janie Young Price. Yet, from a posture of humility, I dare to say this about them both. They led by word and example; they served Christ in all persons, loving their neighbors – even those who opposed them – as themselves; they strove for justice and dignity among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being.

May each of us go and do likewise – **with God’s help. Amen.**