

Epiphany 2 Year A
St. John 1:29-42
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St. George's Bolton
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Looking for Something?

“The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, ‘Look, here is the lamb of God!’ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, ‘What are you looking for?’”

What are *you* looking for? Are you even looking for something? Perhaps you are satisfied with the way things are. Perhaps you want more from life. Maybe you're just glad you've made it through another week and don't want to rock the boat.

Recently, I watched a movie called, *“The Social Network”* which was about the beginnings and rapid growth of *Facebook*. In it, a very bright young man, a student at Harvard, synthesizes the ideas of some friends along with his own ideas and creates an online social network that started out as being limited to college campuses, for the purpose of connecting friends, and it grew to be a world-wide phenomena, with more than several billion users today. Obviously, he got rich.

What struck me, and what I think parallels the Gospel narrative this morning, is how fast the word spread about *Facebook*, and how quickly people were ready to join in and use the idea and even improve on it themselves. What started as a few young men gathered in a dorm room grew to include

at least one fifth of the world's population and it is still growing.

Now, *Facebook* is not something any of us truly needs. Man has lived without it for most all of human history. Facebook is an aid to connecting with one another. But it doesn't really help you with how to live your life. It is only a tool for doing so.

I don't belong to it, and I am one of a minority of people who don't. But seeing this, I am beginning to understand that this is going to be part of the future of the church and how we do church and fulfill the mission of telling the good news. In the words of the Psalmist this morning while speaking about God, "*Oh that I could make them known and tell them!*" For the last four years, St. George's has had a fairly busy Facebook page that documents our life together here, and spreads the words about our ministries and things which are coming up in our life. With this tool, we will be able to reach more people than we ever have before. We constantly work on improving it and making it more interesting. Any suggestions?

You see, the movie "*The Social Network*" is about finding a good thing and sharing it with your friends. This is a direct parallel to the Gospel story we just read and is how you grow the church. As the Psalmist says again, [God] *put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; many shall see and stand in awe, and put their trust in the Lord.* The soil is fertile, and good seed sown will always grow.

Facebook is here to stay, if not something like it in the future. *Facebook* is where people gather today, and I dare suggest, they no longer gather in the same places we used to in our culture.

Suffice it to say, People no longer socialize in the ways they did a generation ago, which most of us can vividly remember, and even though some of us may still socialize in some of these ways.

In a recent report published in the New York Times this week, the study noted the demise of political TV advertising which used to carry the message forward and be a powerful political campaign tool. Communication has moved to social media, places like Facebook and Twitter, and that is where the power lies in getting the message out.

Where do people socialize today, do you think?

- People gather at local sporting events at school, like little league or soccer.
- People gather at the movies and other entertainment venues, though not much socializing goes on there. *[It either happens before or after these in very small groups]*
- Weddings and funerals are the last place from the old culture where people gather in the ways they used to. However, this is changing too, as far fewer people are getting married and fewer still are having religious burial ceremonies. I was very surprised to read the results of a census published in the New York Times recently, which indicated that only 10% of the population is getting married anymore and that some 80% of live births were to single mothers. There were plenty of other changes in the data, but these stood out for me.

What is happening to us? What is going on? We are becoming a culture of individuals and small family groups. Our sense of community seems to be limited to rooting for a team or eating at the same restaurant, or living in the same neighborhood, but

even there, few people today know their neighbors because we are too busy to do so, too caught up in our own lives to have time for others. That may even include our own families.

Where does that leave Jesus? And who is looking for something today?

I believe people are looking for something, the same thing they have always been looking for. I believe they are spiritually hungry and they are looking to be fed spiritually. People are, at the very least, curious about God and want to find out about God. Problem is, where do you go today? Where do you go for anything? The Internet.

In the movie, the idea spread rapidly, like a wild fire. The term young people use for this is, "*It went viral!*"

So did news of Jesus and the things he did and who Jesus is: *Viral!* Today's Gospel gives us a glimpse of the very early beginnings of Jesus' public ministry. And if you can't observe anything else, you can say it went *viral* and it did so without the World Wide Web or the Internet.

Listen to how word spread like fire:

One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah."

People brought others-friends and family to Christ.

- They were looking.
- They were looking for something more than the humdrum of daily life.
- They heard about Jesus.
- They found him for themselves.

- They went and told others.

These were very thirsty people. They were told where the water was and they went to drink.

The promise is true:

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. [Matthew 5:6]

What are we looking for? We are looking for a source of spiritual water to quench our thirst:

“But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” [John 4:14]

What is it that grows churches? It is a spark of the spirit combined with a genuine desire to do and tell the good news of God in Christ Jesus. Churches which do the work of God: excited about telling the good news, excited about doing the work of Christ ministering to those in need, both physical needs and spiritual ones, and being the living body of Christ, these churches stand on fertile soil and will grow. Their buildings are worn out from love and use, not neglect.

There are plenty of thirsty people, waiting patiently for a drink of water: Hear the words of the Psalmist:

“I waited patiently upon the Lord; he stooped to me and heard my cry.”

In our Gospel today: *“They said to him, ‘Rabbi’ [which translated means teacher] ‘Where are you staying?’ He said to them, ‘Come and see.’”*

Indeed, simple words, a simple invitation. *Come and see.* Come in for a cup of fresh cold water if you are thirsty. Share with us a drink of coffee or tea...and share in our community of faith.

“The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, ‘Look, here is the lamb of God!’ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, ‘What are you looking for?’”

Long ago the prophet Isaiah said, *“I will give you as a light to the nations.”* Grant that your people, illumined by Your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ’s glory that He may be known, worshiped and obeyed to the ends of the earth. AMEN