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January 18, 2026

The Second Sunday after Epiphany

John 1:29-42

Isaiah 49:1-7

Psalm 40:1-11

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

I have officially gone down the sourdough rabbit hole.

And so far, I've learned two important lessons....

- Consistency and commitment are essential.
- Adaptability is critical to your baking success.

Working with sourdough reminds me of an old quote that I ran across the other day... *What you cultivate in your life is what will grow.* And indeed, sourdough when cultivated well will grow. But it will not grow without the right conditions.

Because sourdough is a living organism. It needs to be fed and cared for. It has to be nurtured every single day. You can't just leave it on your counter and expect it to do anything of value. You have to choose to take care of it.

Sourdough reminds me a lot of Jesus.

Or more specifically it reminds me what it takes to follow Jesus. Because in many ways, being faithful to the Gospel requires the same thing as my sourdough starter. It requires consistency and commitment to what Jesus taught us and it requires the ability to adapt, grow, and change as a result of those teachings.

We can't neglect our faith if we want it to thrive.

In our Gospel, we find John at the forefront of these lessons. Two times in our reading John is hanging out with some folks when Jesus walks by. Each time John gets so excited that he basically yells out... *Hey guys!! Look! It's Jesus! He's the one I've been telling you about!*

John wants people to stop what they are doing and notice what is happening right in front of them. He wants them to pay attention because knowing Jesus is a relationship worth cultivating.

Jesus on the other hand seems calm, cool, and collected. He wasn't chasing folks down or trying to sign up new followers. It's only when John stirs up some excitement that Jesus turns and says to the people... *"So...what are you all looking for anyway?"*

It's such a great question. And notice that Jesus doesn't answer the question for them. He lets it linger so they can think about their response and name what it is that they truly desire.

What is it you want to learn? Who is it that you want to be?

This is so important because the commitment to follow Jesus has to be their own decision. They have to take accountability for the commitment and be willing to follow through.

And then and only then does Jesus tell them to “come and see.” Let me show you what this commitment will look like. Jesus opens the door. The word our text gives us to describe this invitation is the word “*abide*”.

When the disciples ask Jesus, “where you are staying” they are asking...where are you abiding. And the Greek translation of “*abide*” conveys the desire to cultivate a committed and consistent presence with one another.

Remember our first lesson...Consistency and commitment are essential for this relationship to thrive.

And when the disciples decide to abide with Jesus, they are also saying that they are willing to be changed, to adapt to a new way of living. They are willing to be molded into a new person, to let go of old ways of thinking and believing in order to be formed into a faithful follower of Jesus.

Remember of second lesson...Adaptability is critical to their success.

Let me go back to our sourdough for a moment.

What happens if you don’t commit to consistently cultivating your sourdough? What happens if you just leave it on the counter and ignore it?

It will become weak. It won’t thrive. And you will never get that tasty loaf of bread you long for.

It’s the same with faith. We can cultivate it or we can let it languish and become unproductive.

I read a commentary this week that really brought this home for me. Commentator Mark Clavier says that there is “*a corrosive kind of spiritual apathy that sets in when a community no longer really knows what it’s for....It comes when effort parts company with meaning and purpose....You’ve lost touch with the story that used to make it all worthwhile.*”¹

What that says to me is that we have to be conscientious about our own practice of faith to recognize when our cultivation of faith has parted company with the meaning and purpose of our faith. In other words, when we set our faith on the counter and pass by without feeding it. When we neglect to nurture it. We lose touch with what makes it worthwhile.

¹ <https://substack.com/inbox/post/184740823>

It happens to all of us. And when it does, we simply need to be willing to adapt our lives so that we can cultivate a greater intention of living out the Gospel. To shift our priorities around, to make some sacrifices, to take a stand for Jesus.

That's when the good stuff begins to happen.

Jesus invites us to Come and See. Come and see what this life of faith can do. And it is our job to make the decision to abide with him.