

The Rev. Emily Dunevant

John 1:29-42

Isaiah 49:1-7

Psalm 40:1-12

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

January 15, 2023

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany

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This has been a stellar week for our church staff. My family got a new puppy. Dee and George got a new puppy. And, Brian and Michaela got a rescue hound. And, between the “should we” or “shouldn’t we” and “are we crazy?” or “what are we thinking?” came the easiest answer for all of us. Simply put...we chose joy.

Yes, a new dog is a lot of work. Yes, it can be inconvenient. Yes, it will change our daily routine. But every ounce of work that goes into raising a puppy or acclimating an older dog to your home brings an immeasurable amount of joy and laughter and goodness. It’s worth the commitment.

Our little puppy has made me think a lot about commitment. What it means. What it’s worth. He has also made me consider other things in my life that require attentive care. Things like family, friends, and above all faith. Like our puppy, none of those things will ever grow to fullness and wholeness without our commitment to nurturing them.

So, I was really compelled this week to read John through this lens of faith commitment. Our text provides some important guidance to help us become more committed to our spiritual growth, to nurture it through on-going, attentive care. As we consider our Gospel reading I want you to remember this phrase...what you cultivate in your life is what will grow.

In John, we find Jesus calling forth a few of his disciples, calling them to focus on following him and to be disciplined in their participation. How does he do that? He does three things.

First, he asks his disciples, “What are you looking for?” Second, he tells them to “come and see.” Finally, we are told an exact time that these actions take place. Look, see, and do. That is how John outlines commitment to spiritual growth.

Step one...What are you looking for? The disciples must take time to reflect on what it is that they desire. They are asked to reflect on what is important to them. Is it Jesus they are looking for or is it something else? Jesus wants them spend time considering what matters most. And so, what they decide to cultivate is what will grow.

Their answer comes in the form of a question, “Rabbi, where are you staying?”

This is a great question and one that our modern ears don’t quite understand. The Greek word for “stay,” as in where are you staying, is “meno” which translates as abide. Abide is a rich word in Greek which implies a committed presence, a lasting time together, a new way of being with one another.

In fact, our text has already used this word a number of times before the disciples even ask this question. In verse 32, when the Spirit descends on Jesus, it remained on him. "Remain" is the same word as "stay" in Greek. Thus the Spirit abided with Jesus. It remained with Jesus. It did not leave him. And the change caused through this abiding of the Spirit was life altering.

And so we find the disciples using this same concept when they answer Jesus' question. They answer, "Jesus, where are you abiding?" Because that's where we want to be. After they have reflected on what it is they are looking for, their response is clear... we want to cultivate a life with you and we want to grow that life. They make a commitment to Jesus.

Step two...Jesus then invites them to come and see. This simple phrase is deep with meaning. It isn't an invitation to simply take a peek at where Jesus is living. It's an invitation to see this new commitment not only with their eyes but to encounter this new Spirit with a total dedication, a total discipline of mind, body, and spirit.

Are you willing to really abide with me? To linger here, to grow here, to stay here? Are you willing to cultivate the change that this new life will bring? The goodness, the love, new way of living that will be required of you. If you are, then Come and See. Let me teach you. That's the invitation.

Step three...we are told the disciples came and saw where Jesus was staying and we are told they indeed remain with him. They make the commitment. And, even more interesting, we are told that it was 4pm in the afternoon. Why does the time matter? Why should we care about this quirky detail of their day?

Maybe we should care because sometimes we just have to put this kind of spiritual commitment on our calendar. We can't just expect it to miraculously take place if we don't make time for it. We can't just peek in and say hey, that looks like a good idea. We have to go in and abide there and sometimes we are going to have to schedule it in.

It's a daily decision to commit to what you want to cultivate in your hearts and in your lives. Will that cultivation be perfect? No, it won't. Will it be easy? Probably not. Will you have to give up some things along the way? Absolutely.

But the joy that emerges from that commitment is worth every moment, every sacrifice, every adjustment that you may need to make in your daily life. Giving your life to Christ and to your spiritual journey will, when nurtured, open your heart in remarkable ways.

What are you looking for? If your answer is Jesus Christ, then come and see. Amen.