

II Epiphany, Year A
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St. Stephen's, Edina, MN

Come and See

The Rev. Nancy M. Brantingham

1 Corinthians 1: 1-9
John 1: 29-42

In the name of the One who made us, the One who loved us, and the One who walks with us still. Amen.

There was an article in the StarTribune a couple of weeks ago about college students who feel they're lacking some important life skills.¹ They may have aced AP physics or be well acquainted with the works of Thoreau and Emerson but they have no idea about how to cook pasta or do their laundry without turning the whites pink.

One senior said he's realized that as he gets ready to move into a post-college world, he's probably "...going to need more than an ability to interpret classic literary works so he signed up for a class on "adulthood," where he is taught the basic coping skills of daily life. "I need to learn how to get this adult thing down and manage life," he said."²

According to the article, he's "...one of thousands of "adults in training" across the country". "We're thrown out into this world and have little idea about what the heck we're supposed to do," said one 21 year old. "I think in general we all feel a little bit lost and don't know where to start."³

These "adulthood" classes focus on practical skills but as someone who still thinks of herself as "an adult in training" I'm not sure that it's really possible to get the adulthood thing down. I think adulthood is the work of a lifetime.

I mean, I've pretty much got laundry down. I can cook and balance my checkbook but how do you keep going in the face of chronic suffering and loss or remain faithful and hopeful rather than give in to fear and cynicism in these difficult times? In my book, adulthood includes things like learning how to manage anger, and ask for forgiveness, and extend forgiveness generously to others, because marriages and families and friendships do not last without them. It means learning to respect the

¹ Frye, Hannah. College students study adulthood Minneapolis StarTribune. 1/8/2020

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

dignity of every human being in a culture that amplifies and applauds pure meanness. These are “adulging” things we all have to learn, sometimes over and over again.

It is said that Rabbi Hanokh loved to tell this story:

For a whole year I felt a longing to go to my master, Rabbi Bunam, and talk with him. But every time I entered the house, I felt I wasn't man enough. Once though, when I was walking across a field and weeping, I knew that I must run to the rabbi without delay. He asked, “Why are you weeping?”

I answered: “I am after all alive in this world, a being created with all the senses and all the limbs, but I do not know what it is I was created for and what I am good for in this world.”

“Little fool,” he replied, “that's the same question I have carried around with me all my life. You will come and eat the evening meal with me today.”⁴

Isn't the 20 something's sense of feeling lost and not knowing where to start fundamentally the same as Rabbi Hanokh's lament that he is alive in this world but doesn't know what it is that he was created for or what he's good for in this world? Aren't there days throughout our lives when we feel lost and don't where to start or what we're good for?

“What are you looking for?” Jesus asks John's disciples when he sees them following him.

What if Jesus asked you that question this morning? How would you answer?

I'm looking for The Way in a chaotic world; for The Truth in a world filled with lies, for The Life that brings peace which passes understanding in a world overflowing with anxiety and fear. I'm looking for hope and for joy, for the wisdom, courage, and strength to do the work that is mine to do.

John's disciples answer Jesus' question with a question. “Rabbi, where are you staying?” They want to know where they can just come and be with him.

And Jesus simply says, “Come and see.”

That's not just an invitation to come and see the house or drop by for a cup of coffee. Come and see is an invitation to be in relationship with Jesus and through Jesus, in relationship with the God who so loved the world that he sent his only Son to save it. Come and see is an invitation to “adulging class” with Jesus as the teacher. And “adulging class” with Jesus is where we learn that God loves us not because we are good, but simply because He made us. It's where we learn that we belong to God and

⁴ Kurtz, Ernest and Ketcham, Katherine. *The Spirituality of Imperfection: Storytelling and the Search for Meaning*. New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1992: 82.

that we were made to love one another as he loved us. It's where we learn what love looks like and how it's done.

"Come and see" is an invitation to be transformed. It means follow me. Stay with me. Do as I do because following Jesus in the way of self-giving love is where hope and joy and courage and strength and wisdom and yes, even the peace that passes understanding can be found. Following Jesus in the way of self-giving love is The Way to abundant life.

This morning's Gospel begins with John testifying to what he has seen in Jesus and pointing Jesus out to two of his disciples. By 4:00 that afternoon, Andrew does the same thing, finding his brother and telling him that he has found the Messiah, he brings Simon to Jesus, or as John has called him, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world".

In John's Gospel sin is not all the bad things we do. It is separation from God. The Lamb of God takes away our sin by taking on human flesh and dwelling among us, working and walking alongside us, showing us the way by bringing us into relationship with God and with one another. "No one has ever seen God," the author of this Gospel writes. "It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known." (1:18) And knowing Jesus, being in relationship with Jesus, changes everything. For Andrew. For Peter. For us.

When Rabbi Hanokh finds himself weeping alone out in the field, he knows he must finally seek out Rabbi Bunam for counsel. He imagines, of course, that Rabbi Bunam has got this whole "why am I here and what am I good for thing" down. Rabbi Bunam's response comes as a surprise and it's absolutely perfect. "That's the same question I have carried around with me all my life. You will come and eat the evening meal with me today."

In other words, "We're both looking for the same thing. Let's find our way together."

"Adulthood" isn't something you can learn on your own. You can't find the Way by yourself. It is learned in the company of others because it is in the giving and receiving that is part of relationships that we learn how to adult, how to be the people God wants us to be. Sometimes we are the one who knows the way. Sometimes we're the one who is lost. That's why we do best when we travel together.

I have been so richly blessed to be in the company of others who have carried the same questions I carry, by people seeking the things I seek, by those who have gone before me on the road and have shared the wisdom they've gained along the way. They've taught me so much by simply sharing their own stories, by giving witness in word and deed to what they've seen and heard and have come to know is true, pointing me in the right direction and walking alongside me on the journey, especially when that journey has taken me through challenging terrain.

We are called to be saints, Paul says, called in this season of Epiphany, to make God's love, as we have seen and experienced it in our own lives, visible to a world in need, by what we say, in what we do, by the way we care for one another, for our neighbors, and for the world God made and loves. We're called to light the way for one another, to walk alongside each other on the way to fully becoming the people God wants us to be. And we are called to invite those who feel lost and don't know where to start, those who are trying to figure out how to get this "adulting" thing down and manage life, those who wonder why they were created and what good they are, - to come and see. We can find what we are looking for by traveling together, caring for and learning from each other as we go. Amen.