

Background to the reading

In our reading four remarkable things happen.

First of all John proclaims that Jesus is the Messiah but also the sacrificial lamb to take away the sin of the world. John refers to Jesus as the Lamb of God twice. IN Jesus' time, the Jews usually sacrificed in the temple a lamb as their sin offering. Maybe John could also have referred to the "Servant of God" in Isaiah 53 who was to suffer and take on the sins of the world.

THEN John testified what he had seen namely that God's Spirit rested upon Jesus and that He is the Son of God. Most Jewish groups believed that the Spirit was not as active in prophetic inspiration as in the Old Testament period. The emerging rabbinic movement and many of their allies, who linked the Spirit almost exclusively with prophecy, emphasized that the direct prophetic endowments of the Spirit had ceased when the last Old Testament prophets (Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi) died. For many of John's hearers, a claim that the Spirit is being restored would be a claim that the messianic era is at hand.

John did not know who Jesus was. It was only by Godly revelation that He knew that Jesus is the Messiah – the Son of God.

Thirdly two of John's disciples wanted to find out for themselves about Jesus and John allowed them to go. Teachers normally trained disciples, who then went out to teach others. To recommend disciples to a greater teacher such as John was doing, was rare, and required great humility and denoted confidence in the other teacher's superiority.

Jesus turned around and asked them a very direct question. Jesus asked them what they were seeking? Their answer which was another question namely where he was staying supports this. They wanted to become his disciples and Jesus knew their intentions. They were seeking to follow Jesus.

And when Jesus invited them they stayed with Him until the 10th hour. The "tenth hour" by usual reckonings would be about 4 p.m., possibly too late in the afternoon to walk a long way home before dark and thus implying that a hospitable person would invite them to spend the night.

The fourth remarkable fact is that Andrew was so taken by Jesus' teaching that he could not wait to find his brother Simon, tell him about the fact that they have found the Messiah and bring him to Jesus. In the Gospel of John Andrew would become the disciple who always brings either people or a message to Jesus.

Jesus knew who Simon was even before meeting him. But Jesus changed his name to Cephas. "Cephas" is Aramaic and "Peter" Greek for "rock." Nicknames were common, and rabbis sometimes gave characterizing nicknames to their disciples. In the Old Testament, God often changed names to describe some new characteristic of a person, although we know that Peter was not always very reliant. But through the grace of God he became the rock who build the church on Jesus Christ as the foundation stone.

Amen

MP 857

I, the Lord of sea and sky

Sermon

38 Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?"

All of us are seekers. We go through life seeking answers to make sense of our lives. We seek happiness and peace. We seek friendship.

Why do we seek? Because we know we will never find something unless we seek after it. In our reading the disciples of John were seeking too. They were seeking to find out who this Jesus was? Was he the Lamb of God, was He the Messiah or was He both?

And later Jesus would show that it is ok to seek, because it is after seeking that the disciples found Jesus to be their deliverer and redeemer. And it is after their seeking that Andrew brought his brother to find Jesus as his redeemer.

It is true that only when one is knocking on a door that it shall be opened. The disciples of John found a door to knock on and Jesus opened that door.

We come in contact with many closed doors especially when it comes to the things of faith. Most of the times we just want to give up but Jesus is encouraging us to always continue. Similarly there are many people seeking faith, hope and love who needs us to lead them to Jesus like Andrew did.

But we cannot all be ministers. We cannot all be evangelists or missionaries. We are not all good speakers or communicators. How do we do it then? I think God does not expect us to be ministers or extraordinary speakers or

motivators. He wants us to be just ourselves - showing others what it means when we go to church without making a fuss. He wants us to talk normally about daily life's events, about football, rugby or whatever sport we fancy. He wants us to play golf like we always do with our friends. He wants us to go out socially and enjoy ourselves. But He wants us to be never in a situation where we forsake our faith either to be popular or just because we are too drunk. He wants us to show other people that because we belong to Him through faith, that we can be genuinely happy without needing a lot of money, fame or fortune. He wants us to show that we do not fear death because our destiny in heaven is a certainty. He wants us to only use the Lord's name when we pray and not when we want to be funny.

He wants us to be wherever we are, either in the office, in the classroom, in the boardroom, on the construction site showing others that we have someone to speak to when the going gets tough. He wants us to show others we are seekers too. But that we are seeking to find answers not in substances, but with our Lord and Saviour.

So we must actually just ask ourselves the question What do we seek on this year 2014?

If we are seeking to find Jesus, He is here all around us. If we are seeking love, it is here all around us. If we are seeking hope, it is here. And if we want to know more, we must take our Bibles and read it wherever we are. But when we read, we need to read it with the same compassion and conviction that we would when reading our newspaper, article or popular book.

Let us go out now not as holy people who think we are better
and holier than the rest of our villages,
Let us not go out to try evangelise all the people we come in
contact with,
Let us go out not as judges ready to judge others.
Let us not go out as police officers ready to arrest anyone
who do not adhere to our beliefs....

No let us go out as peacemakers, as people who have seen
the Glory of God, let us go out as ordinary people who have
been saved by the Grace of God and let us sing wherever we
are, in the shower, while we are working "Amazing Grace,
how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me....
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now, I see....
Amen