

Second Sunday after Epiphany
Year A

Isaiah 49:1-7

Psalm 40:1-12

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

John 1:29-42

How do we encounter Jesus? How does our initial encounter impact our on-going relationship with Him?

In the Gospel reading for today, we read about several encounters with Jesus. We begin with a statement by John the Baptizer about what he experienced at the baptism of Jesus and his conclusions from that encounter. John is not just talking with the reader, but with a couple of his disciples. In his opinion, John feels that Jesus is the Lamb of God, one who is greater than himself. Thus, when Jesus comes by and John repeats this claim, two of his disciples follow Jesus.

What was their expectation? They had heard John's statement and were probably curious enough to find out more for themselves. Thus, they followed Jesus. When Jesus asked them what they were seeking, their response was more than just asking where Jesus was staying for the night. Their question was more along the lines of asking what a long-term relationship with Jesus might mean. They wanted to know what they might be getting into if they were to have a relationship with Jesus. Jesus rarely answers a question with a direct answer. He invites these two to come and explore for themselves.

In each of the encounters we see in this chapter, including those which follow our reading, we see a similar pattern. Someone presents Jesus to a friend and that friend questions what type of relationship might be possible. The answer is always an invitation, usual "come and see." No one is coerced into following Jesus – it is always an invitation. Curiosity is peaked and a new relationship is formed.

When confronted with this new relationship with Jesus, the first instinct is to find a friend and invite them to meet Jesus. John told his disciples. Andrew found Peter and brought him to Jesus. Philip brought Nathanael. Discipleship requires us to bring someone with us. We need to share what we have learned with our friends.

There is also another pattern that arises in these stories. In our relationship with Jesus, we are encouraged to explore what this relationship might be. There is no set plan for everyone. We see this in the titles given for Jesus. Everyone has their own need and finds the answer in Jesus. Whether it be a savior, a healer, or a closer relationship with God, all our needs can be met in Jesus.

In this season of Epiphany, we read about many encounters with Jesus. Whether it was the magi from the east, John the Baptizer and his disciples, or a representative of the common Israelite, people of all walks of life have been drawn into an encounter with Jesus. That same experience

continues with us today. Each of us has our own unique need that can only be met by having a relationship with God through Jesus. Over the next several weeks, we will read about other encounters people will have with this man. I am sure that in at least one of these encounters, each of us will find a path that resonates for us.

May this series of encounters open new paths for us to explore our relationship with Jesus.