

BACK TO NORMAL

A sermon for the Second Sunday after Epiphany

Sunday January 15, 2017

St. Paul's Cathedral, Kamloops BC

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So it's back to normal, whatever normal looks like. The innocence of Christmas, and the exuberance of the visit of ancient Kings has faded. The potential-inspiring Baptism of Jesus gives way now to the unfolding of Jesus' day-by-day ministry. I know I date myself, but the words from the Broadway Musical Godspell still speak to me:

Day by day
Day by day
Oh, Dear Lord
Three things I pray
To see thee more clearly
Love thee more dearly
Follow thee more nearly
Day by day

An ancient prayer wonderfully re-phrased though not re-purposed. Makes me think, what is the spiritual work to be done through Epiphany Season. This is the time of year when we are specially invited not just on a journey, but into a search.

PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift **as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ**. He will also strengthen you to the end . . .

So if we search, **do we know what we are searching for?** If God, and Jesus are mysterious, we likely do not know where to look nor do we know what we are looking for. Cue U2

I have climbed the highest mountains
I have run through the fields
Only to be with you
Only to be with you.

I have run, I have crawled
I have scaled these city walls
These city walls
Only to be with you.

But I still haven't found
What I'm looking for.
But I still haven't found
What I'm looking for.

The whole process, of discovery is more complex than when we lose our phone, wallet, or purse. Though each of these have their own challenges.

We are assured however, over and over again, that God is faithful and will meet our curiosities and reward our investigations. Consider John's shaping of Jesus' baptism and the inviting of the first disciples. Consider some examples where desire meets reward:

1 The next day (John) saw **Jesus coming towards him** and declared, **'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**

2 "After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me." I myself did not know him; but **I came baptizing with**

water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.' And John testified, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, "**He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.**"

3 The two disciples . . . followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, '**What are you looking for?**' . . . He said to them, '**Come and see.**'

Now, as with so much chatter about faith and spirituality, where we often fall into a fascination with individual benefit (what's in it for me), how does God engage, invite or reveal truth to the broader community of seekers? While you don't have it in front of you here are some fine words by Denise Levertov:

Just when you seem to yourself
nothing but a flimsy web of questions,
you are given the questions of others to hold
in the emptiness of your hands,
songbird eggs that can still hatch if you keep them warm,
butterflies opening and closing themselves in your cupped palms,
trusting you not to injure their scintillant fur, their dust.

**You are given the questions of others
as if they were answers to all you ask.**

~ Denise Levertov ~ (Sands of the Well)

So I am thinking aloud, about the questions, yearnings, needs of others and of our community. I am also thinking about how to connect with these often un-expressed searchings. As I think about how "normal" is about to be re-defined politically in North America and even globally, as I think about how climate change will re-shape the economies and physical

spaces of our world, of God's world, as I think about healing and reconciliation in Canada, in our Church, in our front and back yard, I wonder what we, our neighbours and the stranger amongst us will discover when we are all invited to "come and see." And Where is God "staying" today? And finally, if Epiphany is all about God revealing in space and time that which is timeless love in our midst, what will our witness here in downtown Kamloops look like in 2017 and beyond.

Let's talk, at coffee, at our forthcoming annual meeting, in the coffee shops and ski hills, on the riverbanks and in the shelters in our cathedral and city.

Day by Day, God is with us, all, Hallelujah