

There's a sentence buried in the ordination service:

*All baptized people are called to make Christ known as Savior and Lord,
and to share in the renewing of his world.*

All baptized people. Not just the ones with the collars and funny outfits.

How do you feel when I say "evangelism?" Does it make you feel squirmy
to talk about sharing your faith, introducing people to Christ?

As we can see in today's gospel story, it doesn't have to be awkward – it's simply
a matter of leveraging two common human emotions: curiosity and excitement.

Curiosity – "What are you looking for? What are you curious about?"

Excitement – "Come and see where I find meaning and wholeness."

Andrew and his friend are curious about this man whom John twice calls,
"The Lamb of God." It's not a very common way to refer to someone.

They follow Jesus. He turns around and asks: "What are you looking for?"

Such a simple question. "What are you looking for?"

It's a brilliant way to start a spiritual conversation with someone,
friend or stranger. It's a good sorting question.

If they say, "the train station," or "how to make a more money,"

that person may not be interested right now in discovering the love of God.

But when we encounter someone who says, "I want some peace." "I'm looking for
purpose in my life." "I'm looking for healing." "I'm looking for meaning,"
or "joy..." – there's a start for a spiritual conversation.

We don't have to tell them where they can find those things; we only speak of
where we have found those things. If it's appropriate, we can say, "Come and see
a community of others seeking those things, and sometimes finding.

Jesus says those magic words, "Come and see."

See what he's up to. Spend some time with him.

These men do, and they quickly determine that he's the real deal.

Andrew goes and tells his brother. "We've found him! Come and see!"

In the next story, the same thing happens with Philip and Nathaniel.

"Come and see." When you find something you like, you tell people around you.

Those of you who are grandparents – how quickly do you tell people?

It can be the same with the spiritual gifts you receive.

We used to live in a neighborhood world; people were organized geographically. Churches were neighborhood churches, banks neighborhood banks. Not anymore. Now we live in a network world.

People affiliate around common areas of interest.

Close to one-quarter of the world's entire population is on Facebook.

Now, Facebook just started sixteen years ago.

Yet it's tapped into a basic truth about humanity: Friends know friends. Some who are on Facebook say they can't see the point in being "friends" with people they're no longer in actual contact with.

Network thinking says, "I may not have much connection with that person now, but that person knows other people, and they might be interested in what we're up to.

And what are these people we know, and the people they know, looking for?

Connection. Meaning. Purpose. Making a difference. Just like us.

People are hungry these days, hungry for connection to God.

They may not put that name to it, but they hunger and thirst for real community, the God who is Love. Maybe people we know need for us to ask "What are you looking for? Come and see."

And where might we have these conversations?

Wherever we hang out with our friends and colleagues. What if we invited people to a spiritual breakfast group once a week, or a "God Walk?" I've carried a dream of convening a weekly gathering at some non-churchy space in which a small group of people might gather to talk of their spiritual selves. And as the connections grow, so will the group that gathers – because when people have an authentic connection with another person, or with a book or movie or political campaign or anything, they talk about it. "Come and see." "Come and see." When you find something you like, you tell people around you.

Do you think you're not equipped to invite people?

As we heard in our first reading today, the great prophet Isaiah didn't think he was either. He was having a bad day/year/decade.

He knew God had called him to be his prophet, even before he was born.

But no one wanted to hear the message of judgment and invitation the prophet was speaking for God. Who wants to hear that stuff?

Isaiah was rejected, mistreated, and worse. And what does God say?

"I'm not going to waste you on the chosen people. I'm going to send you to the ones who haven't heard! I'm going to make you a light to the nations."

“Nations” is code for “those outside the Jewish community.” Those outside. If our families don’t want to hear it, go beyond, go to the ones outside the church. We can invite people we know to work with us in our ministries. We’re really good at “I can do it myself.” We need to get to “Let someone else do it.”

We are bearers of the Word of God – Christ’s life, Christ’s light dwells within us. We are called to be the bearers of God’s word of hope into the dark places God has given us the spiritual gifts we need to bring light to the nations. Do you know you are chosen? Chosen and precious?

Tomorrow we honor Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday. Do you think Martin Luther King felt equipped to take on a system as wide and ugly and pervasive as racism, segregation, privilege and opportunities held by some and denied to others solely on the basis of skin color and ethnicity? And if you say, “Oh, well, he’s practically a saint! I can’t be like that,” I’ll answer you, “No. He was an ordinary Christian who knew he was a sinner redeemed by the blood of Jesus – and he was faithful to God.” What kept him going through prison and mud and terror, I believe, was his sense that God had called him to this, and that God would sustain him, even through death to the other side of the grave. He knew where real power came from...and it wasn’t in violence or domination.

We are in the fellowship of Jesus Christ. That’s powerful company! And all baptized people are called to make Christ known as savior and friend. We are not asked to speak of things we do not know. We are not called to preach or explain the Bible, or how a loving God can allow suffering or disasters. We are simply called to tell our stories of grace from our own experience. We are simply called to invite people to come and see.

Amen.

John 1:29-41

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "**Here is the Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, '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.' And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God."

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "**What are you looking for?**" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "**Come and see.**" They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. **It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.** One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed).

Isaiah 49:1-7

Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away! **The LORD called me** before I was born, **while I was in my mother's womb he named me.** He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away. And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." But I said, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my cause is with the LORD, and my reward with my God." And now the LORD says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the sight of the LORD, and my God has become my strength-- he says, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; **I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.**" Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, "Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."