

In case you weren't here last week our sentence for this year is from 1 Peter 2:4-5, "As you come to him, the living Stone...you also like living stones are being built into spiritual house to be a holy priesthood". This term our focus is upon the first part of that the phrase "as you come to him" as we think about how we grow in Jesus and especially how we might help others to come to Jesus, that is come to faith.

To help us we are going to spend some time in John's gospel and this morning we look at John 1:29-42. John has given us the somewhat enigmatic entry of Jesus into the world which we know from Carol Services and then focused on the ministry of John the Baptist.

Today as we thinking about coming to Jesus we see something of the Jesus to whom we come, an example of disciples coming to him and then helping others come to him.

1. the Jesus to whom we come v29-36

I am intrigued to watch youngsters playing football today to see the shirts they wear. From an early age the shirts will be Manchester United Chelsea, Arsenal or even Barcelona smaller clubs like Basingstoke or Kettering or Reading don't get a look in. It is the glamour and success that the youngsters want and so it is to the big teams they come. In a moment we will see how a couple of disciples of John the Baptist swap teams to follow Jesus and the question is why? Why would they move from following John to following Jesus? The question may be for you why should I follow Jesus?

I wonder what you might say to a friend who asked you why should I follow Jesus?

Well here we have John the Baptist's testimony to Jesus. In two big statements from John the Baptist we see, as John the gospel writer intends us to see, who Jesus is and why he has come and through that why they and we should follow him.

V29 he sees Jesus coming towards him and says, presumably to his disciples, how much greater than him Jesus is, that while he was baptising with water Jesus will baptise the Holy Spirit. Then we get the big statement of

a. who Jesus is v34, "I have seen and testify that this is the Son of God."

Already in the gospel John the writer has presented Jesus as the word of God who is God who was with the Father from the beginning and is God has come into the world. Throughout the gospel we can see claims Jesus makes about himself revealing his nature as God. Here is the testimony of John the Baptist about Jesus that he is God. This is what I know many here accept, believe and base our lives on. There isn't time to go into detail reasons why we believe this. If you are unsure and want to know more or to question it then that is why we are running Alpha come and find out for yourself. I

simply want to echo this morning the testimony of John the Baptist and the word of God through John here that Jesus is the son of God. He is God.

The other big statement from John the Baptist is about

b. why Jesus came. In v35 John the Baptist refers to Jesus as the Lamb of God but in v29 he said “Look the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” In both he was telling his disciples to look at and to Jesus and described him as the Lamb of God and the one who would take away the sin of the world. Here is God who has come into our world ready to be sacrificed as a sacrificial lamb might be sacrificed in order that sinful humanity might be restored in our relationship with our holy God. Look here is Jesus, God who has come into our world to offer his life once and for all as a sacrifice to deal with our sin so that we through him might be restored as children of God.

Who is the Jesus to whom we are invited to come? He is God who came to lay down his life that we might be forgiven.

I can understand why youngsters claim allegiance to Man United or Tottenham because they want to be associated with big names, with success with glory and so on. Well there’s no greater name than Jesus that is why we are encouraged to come to him. Later in John’s gospel we see how many disciples left Jesus and when he asked the twelve whether they too would go Peter said, “Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the holy one of God.” (John 6:68&69)

There is no one greater than Jesus he is God come to deal with our sin. This is the one we come to

2. Two disciples come to Jesus v36-40

I love hearing people’s stories of how they came to faith perhaps at the end of the service, as with last week where I again encouraged us as the people of God to be the people of God and get used to talking to each other about matters of faith rather than the weather, let me encourage you to ask someone about how they came to faith. Everyone’s story is different. Some I know have grown up in Christian homes and can’t put a date on it. Others like myself can put a date and a place on where we came to faith. For all of us we recognise that it was a process. Yes I came to faith on 8th Oct 1972 – it’s just a passing phase – but I know the process started a number of years before that.

Here we see some steps on the path to faith of two of John the Baptist’s disciples.

Just see what happened and perhaps see how it relates to your story.

Firstly they were **pointed to Jesus** by John the Baptist, v36. Now John had a unique ministry is pointing people to Jesus. He was the forerunner, the signpost pointing to the one to come. But here he sets all of us an example of encouraging others to look at Jesus. To point people to Jesus should be the main concern of the Christian. Charles Wesley’s hymn Jesus the name high over all ends with

these words, "Happy, if with my latest breath, I may but gasp His name: Preach Him to all, and cry in death, "Behold, behold the Lamb!"

For many of us our path of faith began with someone pointing us to Jesus.

As a result the two men "followed" Jesus. They went after him. There was some **interest that had been aroused** in them and they thought they would find out more about Jesus. Does that ring any bells with you?

Jesus, aware of what was going on, v38, turned and asked them "what do you want?" I think John the writer here records this to be understood on two levels. On the basic level it makes sense but also it makes sense if Jesus is asking them **what are they really looking for**. This is part of the point of the Alpha course to help us answer the question "what do I want?" What is it that we are looking for in life? Jesus was making the two disciples of John the Baptist think and then verbalise what they wanted. In a sense he put them on the spot.

Let me ask what are you like when you go to a restaurant? You sit down and there is the menu. You have only been there a couple of minutes and the waiter or waitress comes and ask what do you want? Do you know, do you ask for much more time or do you ask a series of in depth questions about various items on the menu?

Jesus asked them "what do you want?"

The reply seems odd "where are you staying?" But what I think they were saying was can we come and talk with you a bit more? Can we **come and ask questions**.

In the search for faith it is good to do that to **take time**. Having said that a friend this week phoned someone and got an answer phone message which ended, "come to Jesus today because tomorrow may be too late!" In one sense that is true but I would encourage you to take time. We don't have to make our minds up immediately. They in a sense asked for time.

Jesus response v39 was "come and you will see". Again we can see this on two levels in that if they followed they would physically see where he was living but also he wanted them to see, to learn who he was.

Jesus said come and see and he says that to all of us. He says it to those who have yet to come to faith. He asks us to find out about him. To take time to ask the questions, to look at him, to read a gospel and see who he is. If Jesus is God and came to take away the sins of the world why would you not do that? How can you say he is not God unless you have done that, unless you have spent time looking at him from the gospels, asking questions and finding out. Jesus says to you come and see. But he also says it to those like me who have been walking the way of faith for a long time come and see. That is to keep drawing close to him and strengthening our relationship as we renew our understanding of Jesus as we deepen our love for him by focusing again on the cross and seeing

what he has done for us. Jesus says to you come and see. Are you doing that? Our verse for the year says "As you come to him" are you coming to him?

These disciples **came to Jesus** and v39 "spent that day with him". Now I'm not going to suggest that we necessarily need to spend a day with Jesus but you see the emphasis on taking time to come and be with Jesus. The eight weeks of the Alpha course will give us time to do that. Later on in the year I think we may well do another retreat and this time we will literally do what it says here, spend time with Jesus.

Now at the end of all this it doesn't say that they had come to faith and indeed while Andrew is named the other disciple we know nothing more about. But what we see are steps towards faith and perhaps they resonated with you.

But what I hope we can all see and hear is Jesus saying "come". I hope we can all understand that we cannot come to faith or grow in faith unless we do come to Jesus and spend time with him.

3. The first thing v40-42

So Andrew as a disciple of John the Baptist seems to have recognised that this Jesus is greater than John and he swapped his allegiance from the minor to the major v41 he was convinced "we have found the Messiah". Now I am sure Andrew had much more to learn about Jesus and faith in him but he seems to have some understanding. What he did is very noteworthy, v41, "the first thing Andrew did". He had spent time with Jesus. He had talked with Jesus and learned much from him so that he felt able to describe Jesus as the Messiah and what was the first thing he did when he left Jesus? "The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him". He had made a great discovery and wanted naturally to share it.

Archimedes was asked by King Hiero II, to determine whether some silver had been substituted in a gold crown made for him. While taking a bath, Archimedes noticed that the level of the water in the tub rose as he got in, and realized that this effect could be used to determine the volume of the crown. Archimedes then took to the streets naked, so excited by his discovery that he had forgotten to dress, crying "Eureka!" meaning "I have found [it]!" The test was conducted successfully, proving that silver had indeed been mixed in. So taken with his discovery was he that he had to tell others and tell them immediately.

Andrew had found something wonderful in Jesus and the first thing he did was to tell his brother. This was news. This was a great discovery why would he not want to tell Simon?

It may not be news for us that Jesus is, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" We may have known that for many years but still it is a vital piece of information that others need to know. Listening on the news this week to comments about how much alcohol we should or

shouldn't drink I heard Dame Sally Davies the Chief Medical Officer say to the effect it is my job to give people the full scientific evidence on which they can make a decision.

With Andrew it was more a eureka moment but for those of us long in the faith it is a case of helping others to see the full evidence so that they can make a decision.

For Andrew and for John the Baptist their awareness of who Jesus is caused them to immediately tell others. This friends remains our task, responsibility and privilege today. "We have found the Messiah" and others need to know that too because Jesus is the one who can take away the sins of the world.

Friends we have opportunities to do this. We have special events like the women's breakfast and the men's supper. We have the Alpha course. But we also have the regular things of Messy Church, CCBBies, our Sunday services and so on. Or we can just talk with our friends over a coffee. But one thing we cannot do is nothing. This is far too important a thing to do that.

"As you come to him." The encouragement of God's word today is to make time to come to Jesus to find out more of who he is as God come to earth to take away the sin of the world. Then having come to Jesus to be like John and Andrew and point others to him as well.

Tomorrow take time to be with Jesus listen to God as he speaks through the Bible to you and then ask him to lead you to someone with whom you can share something about Jesus.