

Matthew 3:13-17  
St. Marks's – January 15, 2023  
Second Sunday after the Epiphany  
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Ask, listen, and say 'yes'

Last week we read about the Baptism of Jesus and this week we read about it again, but this time from John the Baptist's perspective. We won't hear from John the Baptist again until the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of this gospel when he tells his own disciples that he must decrease and that Jesus must increase.

One of the many inspiring things about John is his faithfulness to the path and the works laid out for him by God.

This reading begins with John at the center of the story and ends with John fading into the background. John decreases as Jesus increases.

We are at the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry. His ministry that changes human life on Earth. Life on Earth as it had been since the beginning of time. His ministry that made our salvation possible.

Our reading begins with John the Baptist declaring Jesus to be,

“the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

Clearly establishing that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah.

Then John declares that he, “did not know” Jesus until this time. That seems odd for a few reasons not the least of which is that they were related and would have been well acquainted by this time.

What he is saying here is that he knew Jesus, but didn't know until now who Jesus really was. John clears up this confusion when he speaks of a divine revelation as our reading continues.

We remember from last week that we read about what happened when Jesus was baptized. We remember that the Spirit of God descended on him.

John tells of Jesus being revealed as the Messiah as he says,

“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."

God sent John to baptize with water. He told John that when he baptized His Son he would know it and John did.

John, the voice crying in the wilderness. John, thought by many to be crazy. John was the first to loudly proclaim Jesus to be the Lamb of God and he kept on proclaiming it until he was murdered.

John was faithful to the path and the works laid out for him by God.

In this reading we see the progression of John's followers moving from being his disciples to being chosen by Jesus to follow him.

Andrew is identified in this reading as being one of John the Baptist's followers and we read here that he brought his brother, Simon, to Jesus. It is Andrew who brought Simon, soon to be named Peter, to Jesus.

Both "Cephas" and "Peter" translate to "rock" in the Aramaic and Greek languages respectively.

Andrew brought Simon Peter, the rock on which Jesus will build his church (Matthew 16:18), to Jesus. Peter is hugely prominent in the story of Jesus' life both before and after the resurrection. Andrew is most definitely not.

As John, the gospel writer tells the story of the beginning of Jesus' public ministry we see seeds of what is to come.

Most obviously we see Jesus as the Lamb of God. The sacrifice that will save us all.

We also see Jesus gathering people with different skills and gifts.

- Peter, the organizer, protector, and leader.
- Andrew, the quiet and unassuming one who stays out of the limelight as he brings others to Jesus.
- The unnamed follower who was with Andrew; with gifts and abilities known to God alone.

Jesus will use all of the abilities, skills, and experiences of the people gathered. He will use all of their gifts to further his mission. Jesus wants to use those good gifts in each of us for the good of his body on earth today. The body we call the church.

Our reading this morning ends with Jesus renaming Simon as he puts a name to Simon's potential when he names him Peter. Peter has a long way to go, much to learn, and many mistakes to make before his potential is realized, but Jesus sees that potential none-the-less.

Jesus sees so much more in each of us than we see in ourselves. When we ask God to use us as is best for His church, the body of Christ, we never know what exactly we are inviting. We never know what it to come. In my life I've been strengthened and uplifted and greatly blessed by where that prayer has taken me.

When Paul wrote to the Christians in Ephesus he told them that we are created by God for good works. He goes on to say that God prepared these good works long before we were born and we are to walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).

God has laid out a path for each of us. All we have to do is ask and then listen and watch as the answer is revealed to us. Then at the last, exercise our freewill and say, "yes" and walk in the path laid out for us.

May each of us be like John the Baptist; faithful to the path and the works laid out for us by God.