

Conley Memorial Presbyterian Church, Second Sunday After Epiphany,
January 15, 2017

How Did You Find the Lord?

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John 1:29-42 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Our scripture reading from John tells of finding the Lord. John the Baptizer looks up and sees Jesus coming toward him and says, *"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* But he doesn't stop there, he says to those around him, *"I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him ... I testify that this is the Chosen One."*

John the Baptizer had found the Lord and he wanted to share what he had found with everyone. He was, gasp, evangelizing.

He wasn't doing the kind of evangelism that we tend to dread, not at all. He was just sharing what he had found with others. He was sharing his joy, his good news.

The next day, two of his disciples were standing with him and John pointed out Jesus to them exclaiming, *"Look, the Lamb of God."* John's two disciples were obviously curious at this remark and followed after Jesus who asked them what they wanted. They asked Jesus where he was staying and he simply said to follow him and see. One of the two disciples was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. The two disciples stayed with Jesus that day, talking to Jesus and listening to him talk and share thoughts with them. They were being evangelized --- not by someone standing on a soap box and preaching hell fire and brimstone --- but by Jesus simply talking to them.

Andrew then went with great excitement to Simon Peter telling him that the Messiah had been found. He took Peter to Jesus and the rest is history.

In Paul's letter to the church at Corinth he too is evangelizing by telling what he knew about Jesus saying, *"... you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly await for our Lord Jesus to be revealed. He will ... keep you firm to the end, so you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."*

The church at Corinth had its troubles as we all know and people were drifting away so Paul was re-evangelizing them with his letter. Again, no soap box hell fire and

brimstone preaching. Instead Paul was simply sharing with them what he knew and was redirecting them.

The Rev. Edyth Pruitt at Fairview Presbyterian in Lenoir, NC gave a sermon six years ago on these same scripture passages. In that sermon she likened evangelism to a young child who is so excited about something that she wants to share it with everyone right now. “Mommy, mommy, look at what I found.” It may be a flower, a colorful rock, an insect or something else. The child is so excited that she simply has to tell the world about the wonderful thing she found. She is enjoying her discovery so much that she has to share her joy with others.

Evangelism is just like that. It is going on a journey with Christ and enjoying it so much that you can't wait to tell others. It is a journey of excitement that you simply must share with other people.

The devotional guide, These Days (January 10, 2016), likened this enthusiasm to Ed McMahon, the announcer on the Tonight Show, beginning each show with “Heeeeeerrrrreee’s Johnny” as he introduced the star of the show, Johnny Carson.

John the Baptizer was Christ's Ed McMahon. He had to excitedly tell others that Jesus was the star, the one they were waiting for, the Lamb of God, the Messiah. His enthusiasm was contagious and it spread to others, to two of his disciples, then to Simon Peter and in short order to many others. Enthusiasm is the key to successful evangelism, not coercion, not pressuring people, not threatening them with damnation. It is enthusiasm for what you have personally found in Christ.

We need to look at Jesus in a new way. Look at Christ again. What brought you to Christ? Take the time to examine your beliefs and share your thoughts with others. Many people are wary of those who evangelize or are frightened by it. This is understandable for many evangelists have given evangelism a bad name.

John the Baptizer simply recounted his encounter with Jesus at the Jordan River and how this encounter made him know that Jesus was the Messiah. He saw and he shared what he saw.

Follow John's example. Don't be forceful or demanding --- just tell people what you have seen and heard.

If you are not willing to tell others, what does that tell us about your faith? We tell people about a great new restaurant we visited and how good the food was. We tell

about a good movie or TV show that we saw. We tell about an exciting place that we visited on our vacation but we rarely tell people about the greatest things of all, Jesus, our church, and our faith.

John 3:16 says, *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* We know that. We believe that but, if we don’t tell the world, the message stops with us.

If we are unwilling to tell the world, what does that mean? Does it mean that we don’t have anything worth sharing about our faith? Are we so comfortable in knowing God’s grace, so used to our small community of faith, that we don’t realize what we have to offer to others?

As we begin this New Year remember that everyone needs a savior. Everyone needs the one who can rescue and redeem them.

As you pray this week, pray for a deeper understanding of your faith. Remind yourself how you found the Lord and look at Jesus again. Find something that you want to share with others. Don’t procrastinate. Don’t be self-satisfied. Don’t be reluctant to talk to others.

Just do it!

Amen.

Note: Scripture quotations are from the New International Version of the Bible, 2011