

Meeting Jesus

CHURCH OF SAINT CLEMENT·SUNDAY, JANUARY 19, 2020·6 MINUTES10 Reads

The Second Sunday after Epiphany

Rev. Robin Razzino

January 19, 2020

John 1: 29-42

In the Name of One God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

I had just walked into the St Clement preschool to pick up Zoe after work. I had stopped to say hi to Dory when suddenly a loud crash came from the purple room. I thought maybe a large shelf had fallen over. We both ran down the hall. When we got to the purple room, Zoe was the first child in a line of children coming out of the room. She melted into my arms and I led her and the other children into the children's chapel.

As most of you know, in June 2015 a motorcycle was hit by a car on Quaker and half of it flew through the window of the purple room, over the children playing under the window and into the opposite wall. Thankfully, no one was seriously injured including the driver of the motorcycle. I have no other explanation other than that it was a miracle that all were okay.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. Ill never forget it. Or the moment about three hours later once I was home. I was finally alone in the nursery (Anna was still a baby) and I just sat and wept. Thank you Jesus. Thank you Jesus. Thank you Jesus.

Maybe you have had moments like this. Maybe they were happier or at least less scary. The moment you realized you loved your spouse. The moment your children were born. The moment you watched the moon landing, or the Berlin Wall come down, Barack Obama's late night acceptance speech at Grant Park in Chicago in

2008. Maybe you remember the moment Daniel Hudson recorded the final out of last year's World Series.

We remember the details of moments that are important to us and when we tell the stories to others, the details may not mean anything to the person with whom we are speaking, but to us they are the details that anchor the story and bring us back into the moment seemingly in real time.

I believe this was the case for the person sharing the account we just heard. Many people believe that the disciple that is not named in the passage is indeed the writer of the 4th Gospel, John the beloved disciple. Here he is naming the details that help anchor the story for him, that help bring it present into his consciousness – and into ours.

“It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. I remember the sunlight as it hit the faces of my friends. I remember Jesus' face – his expression – it was a very subtle smile – you could have missed it for the intensity of his eyes – I remember his expression as he asked us: *What are you looking for?* I swear he knew the answer before he even asked us.”

Maybe you all remember the first time you walked through these doors. What you needed most at that moment. What your heart desired.

Maybe you remember Jesus' expression when you met him here. Maybe it was in the face of the person sitting beside you? Or the homeless man you met when you worked the shelter overnight?

If not here, can you name the time when you first met Jesus – or were called by him? Was it when you were a child? At summer camp – or in Sunday school – or in the sermon that stayed with you – maybe when you were just fourteen.

When did you first realize that Jesus loves you deeply – just as you are. When you first heard the words – uttered at Jesus Baptism – but meant for you too:

“This is my brother – my sister - the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

I don't remember a time in which I didn't know Jesus. But I also don't remember the moment I met him for the first time – that moment when I wasn't just taking the relationship for granted.

I don't even remember the moment he called me to be a priest. But there were moments – there ARE moments - so many moments I could name when I hear him calling out to me – with those very same words: *What are you seeking?*

Jesus welcomed me into a conversation – a back and forth – a dialogue and a relationship – which became the foundation of my story – of the love and trust from which my life grew and blossomed.

It was the same for the first disciples. And it is the same for each of you.

Jesus is inviting you into a conversation with his question: *What are you seeking?* But he also knows the answer – he knows what you need – and what he needed and knew from his relationship with the Father – we seek and need a love that abides, that remains, that envelopes us all.

As Karoline Lewis says in her commentary on this passage (Dear Working Preacher 2017), “ For these first disciples, about four o'clock in the afternoon was their first time, by invitation from Jesus, to abide. Not just to come and see, but to come and be.”

What are you looking for? Jesus asks.

Where are you staying? the disciples respond.

It is as if they are following a script that was written before time. They were already drawing close to Jesus, attracted like moths to light, or waves to shore.

Where are you staying? The disciples asked.

And Jesus' heart leapt. It was true. Light left and came to him in the same moment.

The disciples were not asking for Jesus' address. They were drawn to know who Jesus is and what he offers. They were drawn to a promise that was planted deep in their hearts.

"Where are you abiding, Jesus."

"Come and see."

"Come and see – it's here!"

This is the place - right here. This is the place I am abiding and this is the place I will abide forever.

I am abiding with you now in a new way – it's true.

And I want to tell you more.

Show you more.

And, yes, demand of you – more.

But I have always been with you - and I will never ever leave you alone.

My Father and I need you to know that.

You think you have been seeking me – and you have.

But I too have been seeking you."

The disciple in this passage - the one who is a witness and participant in this divine back and forth - is unnamed but we believe him to be the Gospel writer of John because of the details he shares with us.

As theologian NT Wright writes, "he remembered those early days, and the conversations with Jesus, with all the vivid recollection that goes with a life changing moment. That's why, though he translates the key words so his readers will understand, he doesn't want to change the actual words he remembers so well. You don't alter the foundation of the house you're living in. When you go looking for

Jesus, and discover that he is looking for you, you will remember that day forever (John for Everyone p 16).”

My friends, don't alter that foundation of the house you're living in. Strengthen it. Repair it when necessary. Welcome others in. Open doorways. But always remember the moment you moved in and met your love for the first time.

Amen.