

Grace Church, Alexandria, Virginia
2 Epiphany - January 19, 2014

Isaiah 49:1-7

Psalm 40:1-8

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

John 1:29-42

“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.”

I think this gospel passage contains the very best story about St. Andrew, one of my favorite saints, the brother of Simon Peter. Andrew does not get quite the same attention that his brother Peter gets, at the very center of the disciples, with Jesus calling Peter, “The rock on which I will build my Church.” And yet, would there be any story of Peter without Andrew?

I love the phrase Andrew uses to get his brother’s attention and bring him to Jesus. He says, “We have *found* the Messiah.”

This may seem a little silly, but the phrase really makes me imagine some kind of cosmic game of Hide and Seek. “We have *found* the Messiah,” as though He had been hidden somewhere and all His future disciples were hunting around looking for him.

And that’s actually a bit like the language we hear in Isaiah today about the Messiah. Isaiah prophecies about the coming of the Messiah, who will bring all the people of Israel back close to God, and then will invite all other people of the world to come close to God as well.

But Isaiah also portrays the Messiah saying this: “The Lord 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.”

Eventually, Jesus is going to be a “light to the nations.” He is going to be visible to everyone. But first, for a while, His presence is hidden within the world. He is there, but harder to see, so that you really have to look for Him, as Andrew did.

And so this idea of Hide and Seek is actually kind of what Andrew was doing. That is why he started out as a disciple of John the Baptist - because he was hunting for the Messiah, seeking Him, looking anywhere he could think of to try and find Him. And he thought John the Baptist might show him the way.

So the passage from Isaiah is a bit like the beginning of the Hide and Seek game, when we find out who is "It" - who we will look for. And the time between Isaiah and the opening of the Gospel story today was the time when everyone waits eagerly, and perhaps impatiently, to go find Him - trying to count really fast, or even skip a few numbers in their eagerness to begin the search and find the Messiah.

Even when God lived on earth, when Jesus was walking around in Palestine, He was hidden right in plain sight. Because He looked like other people. He was an ordinary human being. God came to be part of the world in the normal ways that we are part of the world. He had a family, like us. He worked, and studied, and ate, and slept like us.

He didn't walk around with a halo glowing over his head, and so you can see how people might have found it hard, sometimes, to recognize Him as God, even if they were looking for Him.

So how phenomenally excited Andrew must have been when he did find Him! When John the Baptist, his teacher, pointed Jesus out to him.

How exciting, to be one of the first people to find Jesus, to recognize that the Messiah was right there with him, to find the Son of God.

But what I love even more about the story of St. Andrew was the first thing he did when he finally found Jesus.

After John pointed out Jesus to Andrew and his fellow disciple, they followed Jesus and then spent the day with him. But *first*, the Gospel says, *first* Andrew found his brother Simon and told him that they had found the Messiah. And "he brought Simon to Jesus."

He shared his discovery, his excitement, and his joy with his brother, so that they went together, and Simon Peter could rejoice at having found the Messiah, too.

And so it seems to me that St. Andrew's story is a model for us in 2 ways:

First, in his seeking for God.

Second, in his sharing what he found.

First, in his seeking for God. Andrew looked carefully to find and see where God was. And we, also, can do this now, between Jesus' first coming to earth and His final return. Even though God is not walking the earth in human form in the same

way He was in Andrew's time, God is still here and we can find Him, or signs of His presence, all around us.

For instance, in the world around us we may find the fingerprints, the signs of the loving God who made the world we live in.

In our experience of love we can find God, since we learn in Scripture that God is Love. So whenever we experience or see or share our love, God is present with us.

God is also hidden in plain sight every time we gather in worship and celebrate the Eucharist - when we receive Holy Communion. This is, after all, what we mean when we say "The Body of Christ" and "The Blood of Christ" at the altar rail. We mean that God is truly present there with us, that Jesus promised to come to us whenever we celebrate the Eucharist in remembrance of Him.

Just as in His human body Jesus looked like any other human and it could be hard to see that He was God, in the same way the Bread and Wine look like other bread and wine (okay, the bread looks a little unusual for bread). But in fact, Jesus is present in the Eucharist as He was at His Incarnation. When we receive the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood, *God* is being placed into our hands. And God enters into our hearts and bodies.

And that reminds us that we ourselves are all the Body of Christ. Jesus is present in each of us. We can look for Him in each other. He is present in our friends and enemies.

He is present also in the poor and outcast - as He says, "Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do to me." He is present when as the Church we gather together - as He says, "When two or three are gathered in my Name I will be with them."

And so, if we seek Him, we can find God all around us.

What good news! And so, like Andrew, once we discover this joy, we can invite others to find that joy, find God, too.

And we don't have to delay, waiting until we're perfect or great at finding God all the time. We don't have to wait until we can answer every question someone might ask us about Jesus or our faith. We don't have to wait until we are better people - better examples of "Good Christians", or of faithfulness, or of kindness even.

Andrew himself didn't wait for *anything*. He had just seen Jesus for the first time. But he was so excited, and he loved his brother and wanted to share his excitement with him, and so he went and found Simon, and pointed Jesus out to him. And Simon became a disciple, too.

Sometimes our joy and excitement about God can be the most convincing way we have of pointing to the presence of God. Or our love for family, friends, and neighbors could be the most convincing sign that we have found God. Or our own struggles, successes, and challenges in trying to find and understand and believe in God and follow Him can be the most convincing witness to others that we are seeking after a God who is real and worth finding and following.

So I pray that we all may keep seeking, and finding, and inviting others to seek and find the Presence of our God, who is coming in His full glory, but in the meantime is hidden all around us.