

Reading

The Lamb of God

²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him and declared, 'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' ³⁰ This is he of whom I said, "After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me." ³¹ I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.' ³² And John testified, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.' ³³ 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." ³⁴ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.'[Ⓜ]

The First Disciples of Jesus

³⁵ The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶ and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' ³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸ When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?' They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' ³⁹ He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹ He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated Anointed[Ⓜ]). ⁴² He brought Simon[Ⓜ] to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter[Ⓜ]).

Sermon

Today we have reached sermon number three out of six in our series on discipleship, almost half-way through. And I'll take this opportunity to remind you that we are putting them all the sermons on the Benefice website so that you can read or listen to them again or catch up if you missed any. You really should listen to them order to get the benefit of the full series in its proper sequence and to prepare for our service with an act of commitment in week six

I hope you can all remember that in my introductory sermon two weeks ago I said, amongst other things, that Jesus did not command us to do very much, - Only to Love God with all our heart mind soul and strength, and to love our neighbours. Most of the rest of what he did and said was simply explanations and demonstrations of how to do those two things.

And then at the end of his time with us on earth Matthew records in his Gospel, chapter 28 verses 19-20 he gave the so called great commission to go into all the world and make disciples, baptising them in the name of the Father Son and Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all that he had commanded us. You will also remember that last week Jenny talked to us about how our love, imperfect and small at first should grow and grow in response to God's perfect limitless and unconditional love. This is at the heart of our discipleship journey. We love because God first loved us.

Today I want to focus on one part of our response to God's love, and I want to do so in the context of Matthew 28 and verses 40 to 42 from today's Gospel:

One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah'. He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter).

So today I want to talk about one of the bits of discipleship that we don't like to talk about. It is the word we are frightened to say, it is the "E Word" - Evangelism. That's what I want to talk about but I know it's a word that fills many of you with dread, so instead we'll talk about something safer. Let's talk about Church Growth, because Church Growth is something that can happen around us, without us having to do anything. The trouble is that it can, but it won't. I remember years ago seeing a poster on a wall and I think I've seen it on a tea towel as well, it described a job that SOMEBODY needed to do. EVERYBODY could do it, but because ANYBODY could do it, NOBODY did. The Church won't grow unless we ALL take God's message into the world around us, that's all an evangelist is. The word, is built around the two syllables in the middle – angel – and it simply means God's messenger

Everybody in here this morning, I hope, wants to be a good and true disciple of Christ. And as I said in my introductory sermon that means committing to doing what Christ has commanded his disciples to do – Namely:

GO into ALL THE WORLD and MAKE DISCIPLES, baptising them in the name of the Father Son and Holy Spirit and TEACHING them to obey his commands.

There are some key words and phrases in these verses.

GO – that means we have to get up and GO.

And if your get up and go has got up and gone, then my recommended medicine is prayer – Ask God to give you some more. GO means we actually have to do something. If Andrew had done nothing, said nothing, kept his precious knowledge of the Messiah a secret for himself, St Peter's Church Cogenhoe would not even exist because there would not have been a Saint Peter.

So we are to go into ALL THE WORLD, The Gospel writer John said God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son so that EVERYONE, not someone but EVERYONE who believes in him shall not die but have everlasting life.

My first question to you today is Do you really believe that?

Do you believe that he meant it when he said Everyone? Do you believe that he meant it when he said everlasting life? Do you believe that God loves YOU that much?

Do you believe that he loves EVERYONE that much?

We love because God first loved us!

It is because God loved us that we love God back – or should do!

So the question I have to put to you to next is: Are you in love with God? Do you in fact love God with all your heart mind soul and strength? Because if you do then people should be able to see it. We have all seen how teenagers in love behave, They can't get enough of each other, and whether they do it consciously, by carving their names into trees, or unconsciously in the way they behave, they tell everyone around them they are in love. This is what Andrew did, he found his brother and told him all about Jesus. And it's what we should be doing too, whether by words or actions or both we should be telling people all about Jesus. It's not rocket science and it's not difficult, it doesn't need lots of fancy degrees or special training or a white plastic collar around your neck.

Two weeks ago, in here, Revd Irene asked people what they wanted to thank God for, and people told her. Now, if you can tell people in here what you have to thank God for then you can also tell your next door neighbour, the person next to on the bus, the person in the shop, the other person walking their dog, the person waiting with you in the outpatient clinic, and I could go on.

It doesn't matter where it is because we are commanded to do it everywhere. Jesus said Go into ALL THE WORLD. Now I often hear the objection raised, that talking about Jesus to our friends might actually put them off. And that might be true, it might not. But there is one thing I can absolutely guarantee: No one was ever convinced about being loved by God and saved by Jesus by someone who did not talk about their faith.

So here is the catch, and yes you all knew there would be a catch coming along. This is NOT something that everybody can do. I wasn't lying when I said everybody can share their good news about what God has done for them, but only YOU can share it with the people YOU meet. I can't share it with the people you meet. So if you don't do tell them then nobody will. As we have just sung: One shall tell another and he shall tell HIS friend.

It seems to me there are two types of people in the Kingdom of God. Those who came seeking on their own and those who were brought by someone else. What they share is what they found, and what they found is the Messiah. In this passage we see Andrew who approached Jesus and asked to be his disciple. And Simon who was brought to Jesus by Andrew. There is no class distinction in discipleship here. It is Peter who is called the Rock, Peter who will be first among the Apostles, but he would not have been there if Andrew had not brought him. One shall tell another and he shall his friend

However, History has shown that those who are brought to Jesus by others vastly outnumber those who come on their own. How many people randomly turn up on a Sunday morning seeking the Lord Jesus? Most first time visitors are here either with somebody or because of something that somebody said.

Even Andrew, who approached Jesus asking to be his disciple did so because John said "Look here is the lamb of God". And even Jesus is not the end point of the journey, his mission was to point the way the Father. His words from John chapter 14 verse 6 were:

I am the way the truth and the life,

No-one comes to the Father except through me

If we are truly being a disciple of Jesus then we must share the love of God with those around us fulfilling Christ's command in Matthew 28, and bringing them to meet Jesus, as Andrew did, so that Jesus can reconcile them to God in Heaven. Amen.