

Second Sunday after the Epiphany - January 18, 2026

- Isaiah 49:1-7 - Psalm 40:1-11 - 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 - John 1:29-42

“Come and See”

1. It probably has happened to you. You use your phone or computer to buy an item online, or maybe just to do some comparison shopping, and then from that point on, you get all sorts of ads online embedded in whatever webpage you’re looking at trying to sell you that same or similar item.
 - a. And actually, I’ve seen it sometimes when the cell phone, creepily eavesdropping on conversations I’ve had, “helpfully” offers me the item I’ve been talking about.
 - b. It feels a bit intrusive, a bit “big brother” to have the eavesdropping or the computer cookies tracking down your activities only to target ads to you
 - c. I suppose it’s like going in a regular store (you know: bricks and mortar), and a helpful clerk asking “Can I help you find something? Looking for something in particular?”
 - d. It maybe feels like too much commitment right off the bat, I mean, I just walked in here, but they’re trying to make you feel welcome and yet give you space
 - e. Even so, I bet an answer clerks don’t like to hear is “Oh, I’m just looking”
 - i. On a trip to Scotland a couple of years ago, Tracy was browsing at a store, and the clerk asked if she could help Tracy find a particular item.
 - ii. When Tracy replied she was just looking, the clerk translated it to Scottish, saying (I can’t do the accent, sorry) “Ah, you’re having a wee nosey!”
 - f. The clerk wants to make a sale.
 - g. The internet business wants to land the order.
 - h. You may only be looking, having a wee nosey, and so maybe you’re put off by the forward clerk or creepy online ads, not quite ready to commit.
2. In our two passages today, we hear directly and indirectly of people who are searching for something, for a connection to God, thought some may not exactly sure how to articulate it.
 - a. In the Gospel, people follow John the baptizer and later Jesus, looking for something, but what?
 - i. From the beginning of the Gospel, we are hearing the writer guide us to Jesus as the one whom God has sent to the world

- ii. And so here, the writer wants to emphasize that John the Baptist, who was a very important figure of the narrative and of the religious landscape at the time, was himself pointing to Jesus as the one
- iii. John uses well known religious and ritual language to point to Jesus as the one God was sending, as the one people needed to look for
- iv. Probably the image of the lamb of God referred to the Passover celebration, where the Jews remembered the day their ancestors escaped Egyptian slavery,
 - 1. and the last night in captivity they prepared a meal (lamb) and
 - 2. they painted their doorway with some of the lamb's blood to let the Angel of God "pass over" them and keep them safe from terrible violence
- v. Two of John's own disciples then follow after Jesus in what feels like an awkward exchange
 - 1. It's not clear that Jesus could overhear John singing his praises
 - 2. It's not clear why John's disciple follow silently behind Jesus
 - 3. And when Jesus turns around, the question feels odd "What are you looking for?"
 - 4. The disciples were apparently caught off guard, ("Teacher: Where are you staying?") but maybe it was a way to say "we're interested in what you have to say"
 - 5. "Come and see" Jesus replies.
 - 6. One of these disciples goes and get his brother and brings him to Jesus. "We've found the Messiah, God's chosen" was his pitch... Come and see for yourself.
- b. In the letter to the Corinthians, years maybe decades later in Greece, people have already become a part of a home church, and we can read between the lines about what they're looking for.
 - i. These are people who were forming one of the congregations popping up around the Roman Empire which followed Jesus.
 - ii. For one, they were looking to learn more about this Jesus, the one sent by God. Having never met him, they would learn about Jesus from others who were themselves learning about him.
 - iii. They felt the Spirit connecting them, strengthening their faith.
 - iv. They were connecting with each other, but actually in such a way that made them look like weirdos to their neighbors, because, unlike anyone else, they welcomed men and women, rich and poor, locals and foreigners.

- v. All were looking for a place to belong, to use their gifts to serve God
- 3. All of which could lead me to ponder what it is that you and I are looking for when we come to church
 - a. Irish rock group U2 has a 1987 song: I still haven't found what I'm looking for
 - i. Among its lyrics, are these words
 1. I have climbed the highest mountains
 2. I have run through the fields
 3. Only to be with you
 4. You broke the bonds
 5. And you loosed the chains
 6. Carried the cross of my shame
 7. You know I believe it
 8. But I still haven't found
 9. What I'm looking for
 - ii. I wish I could play it for you, but we probably can't afford the rights. I'll link it on FB and on the email you get on Mondays with the sermon text https://youtu.be/e3-5YC_oHjE?si=DaMaOG03MF0yzmud
 - b. If Jesus were to ask us what it is we're looking for in coming here, we may say
 - i. Looking for renewal
 - ii. Looking for a chance to serve
 - iii. What I do hope is that we don't just say "oh we're just browsing!"
 1. And listen, I don't mind "church shopping" actually
 2. I just hope that by coming to this or another church you're actively looking for connections, support, even if it's not something quite clear in your mind yet, I just hope we are avoiding a non-committal "just browsing."
 3. When Jesus replied to the two people following him "Come and See" it was more than an invitation to try on a pair of shoes or put on that blazer and look at yourself in the mirror
 4. It was an invitation to spend time with Jesus and whoever else was already following, to see for themselves up close what this was all about, to experience his hospitality
 5. All of that so they could make a commitment, make a decision as to whether this was what they were looking for.
 - iv. We may be looking for hope, for healing, for growth.
 - v. For God's gifts to bubble up
 - vi. For a little silence in the midst of so much noise.
 - vii. For a song that we can hold dearly in our heart.

- viii. For companionship in this journey of Faith.
4. And you know, if you say to me: I'm not exactly sure what I'm looking for, but I want to figure it out, and want us to figure it out together, that works!
 - a. Like the stars we got this year, with a blank space urging us to listen to God, maybe reflecting on what we are really looking for will help us get clarity.
 - b. And like with the people in Corinth, we can then be grateful that God enriches us, strengthens us, and gifts us in this journey of faith, in this journey to discover what we're looking for...

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/second-sunday-after-epiphany/commentary-on-john-129-42-7>

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/second-sunday-after-epiphany/commentary-on-1-corinthians-11-9-7>

Reflection Questions

1. Share a story of a time when you were seeking to make a change in your life, and you were searching for what that change should be.
2. In the couple of stories in John 1:29-42, what do you think people are searching for and what do they find?
3. What are you looking for from God/community when you come to church or when you pray? If it changes, what are some of the things you have found yourself looking for?