

Epiphany 2 John 1:29-42 St. David's Episcopal (*Elizabeth Felicetti*)

John the Baptist pointed Jesus out to two of John's own disciples and says "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" Intrigued, the two disciples started following Jesus. So he asked them, "What are you looking for?"

Isn't that an incredible question? Questions are hugely important to our spiritual life, yet some of us come to church seeking answers instead of deeper questions. When I work on Bible studies and sermons, I think questions are some of the most important parts. Questions help us link these ancient stories to our lives today.

Most importantly, Jesus seems to have loved questions. He used them all the time. Here he is with his first two disciples, and in this version, he doesn't say "Follow me." In this version, they start following him based on something John the Baptist said to them, and the first thing Jesus says to them is asking a question.

"What are you looking for?"

Seems they have no idea what they are looking for. Do you? Why do you come to church? What are you looking for: answers? An experience? Are you looking for Jesus?

These guys had found Jesus, but they didn't know what they were looking for. They admired John and had been his disciples, and then John pointed to Jesus as the one who was to come. When Jesus asked what they were looking for, they answered his question with a question: "Rabbi, where are you staying?"

Such an interesting question to ask a guy who was about to start a transient ministry, always on the go, walking around healing people, driving out demons, teaching. Teaching about love and abundance.

Jesus answers with that familiar "come and see."

All of this has taken on a new meaning for me since the pandemic and the shutdowns. Many of us were stuck. We couldn't go to church. We couldn't come and see. That made it harder to know what we were looking for.

I am about to enter a new time of not being able to be out and about. My lung surgery is now scheduled for Tuesday, and my surgeon has said that he wants me to be out for three months. That means I will miss the rest of Epiphany, and Lent, and Holy Week, and Easter. I can't quite grasp this. I feel like I was in a frustrating holding pattern for well over a month, knowing that some treatment was needed but not being sure I could have surgery and when it would be. Then boom—as soon as he finally decided I could do it, he had an opening five days later, and I grabbed it.

What I'm saddest to miss is Bible study. I love the Wednesday Bible study, and last Wednesday night, when we used the first session of the Good Book Club, a curriculum that I wrote for Ruth, I thought: this is a career high. Getting to use this curriculum that I labored over for Forward Movement here among people I love, as well as a few people from St. Michael's whom I'd never

met before. I loved it. I'm crushed to miss out on the next five sessions. But the study guide was designed to demystify Bible study so that anyone could pick it up and lead it, and we have a plan in place that will bless everyone who shows up to the study.

What I love most about Bible study are the questions. I spend as much time on questions as anything else when I am creating a study. Much of that comes from theory about adult education and the idea that adults learn best by discussion. Some of it comes from hearing from the search committee more than twelve years ago that they wanted a rector who could make them understand how the Bible pertained to their lives today.

But a lot of my obsession with questions comes from my savior Jesus Christ, who taught with questions and constantly asked questions. "What are you looking for?"

They answered his question with yet another question, and instead of explaining everything to them—instead of giving a cut and dried answer—Jesus said, "come and see."

I'm sad and scared that I won't be here with you all for the next three months, but I am still looking for Jesus. I find him here. I find him in the questions of our children, and in the love that you all show to each other and to me and to God. I find Jesus in the sacraments: the water of baptism as well as the bread and the wine. I find Jesus in all of the people who have offered to help our beloved church on the corner keep going, keep ministering to this corner of God's kingdom, even though I'll be away for a while.

I find Jesus in all of those places, but I am still looking for him. I will keep looking for him over the next three months, and I pray that you all will, too. Especially when we aren't sure exactly what we are looking for.

I already mentioned how much I love questions. I definitely look for and find Jesus in questions. I worry sometimes that the way I almost always end sermons with a question is formulaic, but I am not going to stop. So here are today's questions, which I hope you will keep asking yourself: What are you looking for when you come to church? And if you can't find it here, instead of looking for it somewhere else, how can you help it show up?