



Second Sunday after the Epiphany, What are you looking for? Come and See

Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-12; 1 Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-42 || January 18, 2026 || St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Hanover, MA 02339 || The Reverend Amy Whitcomb Slemmer, Esq.

How are you on this chilly mid-January morning – or as Jesus asks, “what are you looking for?”

If you are like the majority of the people who answer polls in this day and age, it is likely that some of your enthusiasm for or adherence to your aspirational New Year's resolutions is waning. I'll confess that while I'm sticking with my discipline of reading first thing in the morning, it requires more effort now than in the first week or 10 days of the year.

My goal is to spend more time with my face in a book and less time with my fingers or eyeballs on screens because I'm certain it is easier to connect with God and experience divine insights or the Light of Christ we seek in the season of Epiphany, if I'm not constantly subjected to what is force fed or offered to me electronically.

This morning's rich and revealing gospel from John would not have happened AT ALL if one of the participants was walking along with their nose in their phone. And it is a great, and foundational gospel passage.

John is our bible pal who wants to make sure we know that what he describes REALLY happened. That Jesus REALLY is the Messiah and that we each REALLY REALLY have a spiritual road map to follow.

The passage we just read covers a lot of ground, and includes such specific details that the moments described come alive for us. We have another

Sunday with John the Baptist's description of who Jesus is – inviting us to see God revealed through another's eyes and another's direct experience. We get some direct quotes from Jesus, which feels important and special in this complicated time, and then we have the gift of our patron Saint Andrew setting a great example for each of us.

This morning's gospel unspools over two days. The first is an encounter between our friend John the Baptist and Jesus, with John repeating much of what he declared when he baptized Jesus. The next day, Jesus and John cross paths again, and we are offered a retelling of the events of Jesus' baptism, the miraculous experience of the Holy Spirit descending, and then Jesus interrupts this reminiscence with a question to those around him – and sends it through the ages to each of us right here in Hanover...."What are you looking for?"

Isn't that a generous and profound question? What are you looking for? We might ask ourselves that a bit more often, and not just when we enter a room and can't for the life of us remember why we are there. Don't you love that the disciples are so thrown off that they answer awkwardly and totally off topic - "Hey, where do **you** live?" To which Jesus responds with this marvelous and deeply grounding invitation - "Come and See".

Come and see is a profound invitation to some transformative experiential learning. Jesus could stand there and preach about the rules and his expectations – we'll get that a few weeks from now with the Beatitudes, but this morning Jesus invites us to "Come and See."

A couple of weeks ago, I went to Montgomery Alabama, essentially to "go and look". Even though I felt grounded in some of the crummiest parts of American history, having invested some intentional effort to understand slavery in this country and to be mindful of the residue that still infects us.

However, until "come and see", or I went and saw, I had no sense of the magnitude or entrenched nature of the slave trade – crossing every professional discipline and involving institutions and systems that I hold in high esteem.

On Sunday, I made a sojourn to the Edmund Pettus Bridge and retraced the steps of the civil rights marchers who crossed the bridge to pave the way for the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and were brutally attacked. On the Selma side of the bridge I encountered a volunteer whose uncle had been among the

injured marchers. He showed me photos of his uncle and Dr. King and young, sweet John Lewis. My guide also talked about what a profound impact the Episcopal Church had made on Bloody Sunday and beyond. He actually thanked me, and talked about the impact of Episcopal Priest Johnathan Daniels' martyrdom.

You know I'm an easy crier, so the two of us stood and wept in heart break and gratitude, a white woman from Boston and a Black man from Selma.

I asked how his uncle was doing, and this remarkable man showed me more pictures, this time of his very very old Uncle wearing a medal around his neck and crossing the bridge with President Obama – and more photos of his uncle meeting and talking with President Biden.

For a million reasons it was extraordinary that this gentleman and I met, and that I had the gift and privilege of hearing about his Uncle, and his Uncle's determination to maintain his human dignity, even in the face of such violence, hatred and overwhelming force.

I am still grappling with many of the truths and stories that may forever haunt me from Selma and Montgomery, but I am profoundly grateful for the invitation to “come and see”. I think that Jesus was embracing the notion that we have to move our bodies and souls around in this world, even when it is scary.

We aren't going to fully understand something until we see it, or until we can get closer to some part of it. The crescendo to our high school youth group's year will be our pilgrimage to South Africa. Any one of us could talk with teenagers until we have no voices left, but for them to understand different lived experiences or for them to have a full sense of what Apartheid looked like and how it informs current events, we have to go to South Africa, and the members of the South African Volmoed Youth Group need to come to the US and experience our country directly.

“Come and See” or for us, “go and look” does not have to be a world journey or involve plane travel at all. Looking for the Light of Christ can happen in our own parking lot, or in our neighborhoods. But it won't happen or we won't find it sitting in our own space looking at or doom scrolling on a screen.

Seeking to find or to be the Light of Christ, as invited by Jesus, “come and see” takes effort right now! It is so easy to become entranced by the newly

imagined horrors on our city streets, or the indignities offered as eye candy on social media. “Go and look” or seeking a glimpse of the light of Christ requires putting screens down and turning stuff off to witness a stranger help a neighbor in with groceries, or a passenger offer a lozenge to the coughing T rider, or to see a walker stop to help a stranger who has stumbled. Those experiences aren’t going to show up in our algorithms or on our phones.

Coming to church on Sunday – in person or on-line – is a bit like going out of doors on a sunny day to get your dose of Vitamin D. When you come to church you get a great dose of God’s light. You can’t miss the light of Christ when you see or hear our children with delight. You can’t miss the sense of a divine spark when someone responds with a heartfelt or sincere reflection of how their week actually went. Each of you offers the Light of Christ when you generously pass the peace or check in or connect with one another.

We celebrate the Light of Christ and the embodiment of God in the Eucharist and are invited to take this knowledge and experience out with us. To be warmed by the light and love of Christ and to share that gift when we meet people beyond our sanctuary.

The Apostle Andrew was so inspired and moved by the Light of Christ that he had to share it and ran to tell his brother. He invited his brother to “come and see”, and so it has gone through history, bringing us to this morning, together, in this beautiful sanctuary, surrounded by other seekers.

Tomorrow we celebrate Martin Luther Kings’ birthday. There are celebrations, talks and opportunities all around us to learn something new about this civil rights icon. Let’s accept Jesus’ invitation to Come and See. Let’s go and look for the Light of Christ in the world, let us be that beacon for others and may we return to this community to share what we found. Amen+