

Totland Christ Church Epiphany 2A January 2020

HC Epiphany 2 – 1 Cor 1.1-9 John 1.29-42

What are You looking for?

When you come to church, what are you looking for? What do you want?

Maybe you are seeking time and space, out of your daily life

Maybe a thought-provoking sermon, something to affirm or challenge you?

Maybe you like good hymns – although we all have different ideas of what that means!

Maybe you like a quiet atmosphere – or a lively atmosphere.

Maybe it's about space to pray and be with God.

Or maybe it's about community, being with other people.

Or maybe it's lots of these things, or something else entirely.

Speak to your neighbour... then I'll ask your neighbour to tell me what you said?

Imagine that it wasn't me or your neighbour who asked you, but Jesus. Whenever we come to church, we come to meet Jesus, to encounter God. So imagine that Jesus is stood here today and is saying to you: 'what are you looking for? Why have you come to me, what do you want?'

Does this make the question feel different? I'm pretty sure that with Jesus asking, you might want to make a different kind of reply...one that you might not be willing to share... and nor should you.

The biggest difference between church and any other place that we inhabit, is the intention that we will encounter Jesus here. We can of course, meet God all around us. But when we come together for worship, we come with the specific intention of encountering Jesus through hearing God's word, exploring our faith; and at communion, meeting with Jesus, the Lamb of God... through the bread and wine...through prayer... through song and silence and through relationship with one another.

What are you looking for today?

Jesus has asked a profound question, a difficult question. It is one that exists in every life and community. It is, however, a question we often avoid or deny. For most of us it is not the subject of everyday social conversation.

To face our deepest longings, to acknowledge the emptiness within, to inquire about what is of ultimate importance, that which shapes and forms our lives, just is not polite dinner party, or luncheon conversation. It is too risky. It means we would have to get real, be honest, vulnerable and open.

Sometimes we do talk mostly about what doesn't matter until something happens that does matter – a tragedy, a failure, the loss of a loved one, a challenge that seems insurmountable.

That's when the question from Jesus arises from deep within us "What are you looking for?" What do you want?

Ultimately, that question lies at the core of our discipleship, our relationship with God and how we have been called to follow him.

Jesus calls us in different ways, throughout our lives. I can look back on my life and recognise times when God called me and I did not follow and other times, when I followed but questioned everything and these days when I trust that God has a plan beyond my vision and I have to trust him to guide me in fulfilling his purpose...at this time...in this place....

Last week, I was attending a course for rural leaders and we were asked about our visions and hopes for the futures of the churches and communities for which we serve. I had to ask that question of myself, what am I looking for today? What do I see now? What do I want for these communities? But ultimately, what does God want for us as a church, us as a community, us as a nation; us as part of the fullness of God's creation?

What are we looking for? Where is our following of Jesus taking us and the communities which we serve?

It left me with a challenge and yet more questions, for us as a community and church.

So in this season of Epiphany...I decided to ask of myself and God some questions of revelation, for which I ask you all to pray about in the coming weeks...

Is our following of Jesus offering us more hope and a way through the tragedies of life?

Is our following of Jesus filling us with more compassion for the world?

Is our following of Jesus opening our eyes to a new way of being, a new way of seeing, a new way of living with God and one another?

Because if it is not deepening more of our relationships, with those who are different to us; if it is not revealing a deeper love for those who we love the least; if it is not growing us and others more and more into the likeness of Christ... we might want to look again!

Have we found what we are looking for? Have we found what God is looking for...in and through us, as we follow him, in this place.

How can we help more people in our communities to ask their questions of God, to seek out and find Jesus, in both the everyday and unexpected places of life today... in our towns, our villages, in this wonderful place of Totland Bay...in this place of worship, in each one of us? What would it mean for us to point to Jesus, beyond our assurances and questions, within the joys and challenges of being church, in the world today?

What would it mean for us to reach out to people who don't know him yet, people who are looking for Jesus, even if they aren't sure that He is the one they are seeking? What would it mean to invite others, to come and see God at work around us, among us, in all of our and their assurances and questions?

Jesus says to all 'What are you looking for?

Look at your life? What do you see?

Every life and every situation echoes with Christ's invitation to... 'come and see'... 'to follow me'.

Those who will one day come to Jesus may not know now, who it is that they are seeking, or where they will find him...

The disciples asked, "Where are you staying?" Finding Jesus means finding the One we can depend on to remain with us, to stay with us, to share life together and to change us through that experience.

And, together with Jesus, we can reach out to people who don't know him yet, people who are looking for Jesus, even if they aren't sure that God is the one they are seeking, and we can invite them to come and see God at work among us, changing us, loving us, giving us life...not just in our experience of church but in every aspect of our lives, in traditional and new ways of reaching out with the Good News of 'God with Us'

Perhaps today that person is you. Maybe you are the one looking for Jesus to reveal his purpose, afresh in your life at this time, or for the first time...

Maybe you are the one who needs assurance that he is with you, that your sins are forgiven, that God loves you and invites you to become his own beloved child. Please take the offer of one of our prayer ministry team or me to pray with you, now or after the service.

If that's you, let me introduce you to Jesus...

Let me invite you to ask forgiveness of your sins, and to rest assured that Jesus loves you so much, he died for you, so that you could have full life with him - beginning now! Let me invite you to come and see and abide with Jesus Christ, - the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Amen!