

I love the view out of my kitchen window. It looks out to a beautiful group of trees, where I can watch the birds and squirrels. Each morning the sunrise streams through leaves, turning them into something miraculous. And I stand there thanking God and glorying in God's creation. Often, I will point this out to my children. "look at the way the sky is orange this morning" or "look at how the sunlight has changed now that the leaves have fallen".

A few months ago, a child had woken me a bit earlier than I had planned, and I was feeling the stress of packing lunches for school, and getting everyone dressed, fed, and out the door. I was bustling around the kitchen making my tea and generally being a grump, angry that the morning was a slog. Then suddenly Fiona spoke up and said "Mommy, stop. Look outside. The sky is pink and purple today. Isn't it beautiful?" (Pause)

Our gospel readings from both this week and last week are about Jesus calling his disciples Peter and Andrew. But the gospel writers show two very different ways that the disciples become disciples. In this week's reading, we hear about Jesus walking up to the sea of Galilee, seeing Peter and Andrew and saying "Follow me, I will make you fish for people".<sup>1</sup> And then doing the same with James and John. All four of them get out of their boats immediately and follow

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 4:12-23

Jesus. Jesus knew how to speak to their souls and they followed without persuasion or cajoling.

Yet, our gospel last week showed a very different story. Instead of Jesus calling out to Andrew and Peter, it takes John the Baptist pointing Jesus out to them and saying “Look, here is the Lamb of God!”. Then, still not entirely sure, they follow Jesus, ask him where he is staying, and then follow his invitation to “come and see”.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes it takes a little nudge from someone else (like Fiona’s reminder to me) to stop and recognize that Christ is before you.

Which story is the correct one? Both stories tell about Jesus’ calling Peter and Andrew after all. Just like I said to children – the answer is BOTH. There is a reason that both of these gospels were chosen to be a part of our canon. Because we may not know factually how Peter and Andrew became disciples, but we do know that each of these gospel stories holds a deep truth about how Jesus worked in his lifetime and how Christ continues to work in ours. There will be times in our life where Christ will call us directly, just like our gospel today. And there will be other times when it takes someone from our community to help pull us out of our daily lives and see Christ among us.

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<sup>2</sup> John 1:29-42

It is important that we remember that neither of these ways is better than the other, because it is precisely through this diversity that Christ builds community. We might be here because someone invited us or we might be here because we heard a call within ourselves. We might be here because Sheryl's organ playing feeds our souls. We might be here because hearing different voices in the pulpit uplifts or encourages us. We might be here because we feel like our kids are allowed to be kids in this space. We might be here because coming to the communion rail and receiving the bread and wine keeps us going through the week. Even if every single one of our reasons for being here is different, we can have faith that Jesus is calling to us to be disciples in the way that will reach our hearts, and thus building the Body of Christ through us.

Holding onto our unity through our diversity is essential, otherwise we begin to fall into the same trap that the Corinthians fell into. The Corinthians were in an interesting position, because it wasn't just Paul who had brought Christianity to them; another evangelist named Apollos had also traveled to Corinth to spread the word about Jesus. Paul seems not to have been as eloquent as Apollos, and the Christians in Corinth started fighting about whose way was the right one. There were those of the upper and more educated classes who were following Apollos's teaching about Jesus, while the lower-class Christians were following Paul's

teachings.<sup>3</sup> The groups were beginning to say: “I belong to Paul” and “I belong to Apollos” in order to justify their worship. Paul has no patience with their arguments: “Has Christ been divided?” he asks them.<sup>4</sup> He reminds the Christians in Corinth that it is more important to follow Christ who is the Word, rather than the teacher that brought it to them.

This is particularly important for Thankful Ones to remember as we head into a season of transition. It is easy for churches in transition to break into factions of “I want it the way that the old rector did things” and “I want something new and different for the church”. I have seen both my childhood church and my sending parish lose parishioners over fights like this. It is not the rector, or the seminarian, or the deacon, or the warden who we are charged to follow. It is Christ. Being united in Christ does not mean that we will all agree, because Christ calls us to discipleship in different ways. Yet Christ holds us all in the giving of his body and blood to us.

At the annual meeting last Sunday, Mtr. Leyla said that in many ways Thankful Ones are already good at this kind of discipleship. We know we might have disagreements about things, we might not always get along perfectly well, but our unity doesn't come from always being in agreement. Hold onto this strength of

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<sup>3</sup> Class Notes from New Testament Class, Spring 2022

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

yours moving forward. Remember that sometimes Christ will call you in a way that you didn't expect, like when he called Andrew and Peter to fish for people. And sometimes it will be someone else sitting in these pews who points out Christ in your midst when you might have otherwise missed it. Remember that it is through your diversity that you form the Body of Christ.

Hold strong in your love for Christ and one another when you feel the discomfort of a supply priest doing something a little different than how you always do things. Hold strong in your love for Christ and one another when there is something you would have normally brought to Mtr. Leyla and it just feels weird to bring it to an interim who you don't know as well. Hold strong in your love for Christ and one another when the church is trying to write its profile and figure out what you truly want for the future of Thankful. Hold strong in your love for Christ and one another, for it is in holding on to this love that you are truly the Body of Christ and can, as the Psalmist says "Behold the fair beauty of the Lord" and "seek him in his temple".<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Psalm 27:1, 5-13