

## A- 2 Epiphany

John 1.29-42

In today's gospel, we find John the Baptist

Kinda scruffy. Dressed in coarse clothing. Loud! Kinda angry.

He definitely operates outside the established order.

Uses baptism as a ritual cleansing – symbolic for inner cleansing.

You know – if you can't really get to the inner stuff, you can at least pretend symbolically, and hope that works.

Not part of any organized group. Probably none would have him.

He recognizes Jesus – OMG! “Don't ask me to baptize you. You should be baptizing me. (not just a ritual cleanse -- a real inner cleanse)

After the baptism, John sees the Holy Spirit descend on Jesus.

He said, “I baptize with water; he baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

Recognizes Jesus. He recognizes the Son of God

This Jesus sounds like a pretty important fella, doesn't he?

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So how does this important guy respond when two of John's disciples follow him.

You can just see it, can't you? Two guys skulking behind this important dude. “Hey, let's check this guy out!” “Yeah”

When Jesus notices, he asks: “What are you looking for?”

Matter of fact.

I can imagine them saying in their heads, “OMG, he caught us.”

“What do we say now?”

“Where are you staying?” is what comes out. A little lame, don't you think?

“Come and see,” Jesus says.

This, fundamentally, is the invitation Jesus gives to all of us. “Come and see”

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“Where am I staying?” Jesus would respond, “In my Father’s house, where else?”

And what is that house like, that we might want to visit?

First, it is not of this world. It is invisible, and it holds the Unseen within itself.

Second, it is overwhelmingly characterized by love. Not the romantic feelings we call love today. Deep acceptance, deep caring. A sense of being seen for what we are, and an acceptance.

You don’t have to pretend anymore. You don’t have to hide your ‘bad parts’ – everything is out in the open. And it’s okay.

Imagine the weight dropping from your shoulders. Weight you didn’t even know you were carrying.

\* \* \*

What’s the price of admission though? What does it *cost* to enter this beautiful but unseen place?

Humility – to see ourselves as we really are. We all think we are kinda special, don’t we. Yeah, and there are 8 billion of us, all clamoring to be the center of the universe. Pretty silly when you think about it.

We need to let go of trying to be the center of the known universe. That shouldn’t be hard, because we are *not*. But we hold on to our self-importance with all our might.

We need to stop with the judgement, the condemnation. The harsh words directed at others. The ones directed at ourselves too.

If we did that, we would just accept each other, wouldn't we? We would each be okay as we are. Acceptable as we are.

The price of admission seems pretty high when you detail it all out. But is it really? Isn't it just about *stopping our pretending*?

We are all grown-ups here; can't we just let the falseness go? Wouldn't it be easier to just acknowledge the truth?

\* \* \*

And where can we find our Father's house?

It's not this church building, although it is a lovely place.

We won't find it in any other church building either.

In fact, it isn't a physical structure at all. It has nothing to do with buildings.

It's... inside of each one of us.

As Jesus says, a little later in the Gospel of John, "I am in my Father and my Father is in me. In the same way, I am in you and you are in me." Jn 14.10 & 20

And where inside of ourselves do we find this? Our feet, maybe? Our hands? Maybe in our stomachs, which we so faithfully feed many times a day?

No, not even there, despite our faithfulness to our stomachs.

We enter *through our hearts*. We enter... when we let go of the outside things... when we let go of the inside things – our worries... our fears... our constant self-talk...

When we remember our Father has always been with us, deep in our hearts. When we wait upon the Lord... when we wait for that “still small voice” described by Isaiah.

To be present – to be right here, fully and completely – without any pretense. Without puffing ourselves up with our self-importance.

This is how we enter our Father’s house.

\* \* \*

And what do we find there?

We find ourselves transformed! The constant self-talk is stilled. There’s no longer any need for all our chatter.

The negativity that we hold toward others... is released.

The negativity that we hold toward ourselves... is transformed by the love of God. By acknowledging that immense Presence.

We experience, in our own flesh, the “peace of God which passes all understanding.”

And every moment... is fresh!