

Isaiah 49:1-7

John 1:29-42

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

“Lord, put a new song in our mouths,  
a song of praise to our God.” AMEN!

“We are the champions, my friends.  
And we’ll keep on fighting, til the end.

We are the champions,  
we are the champions.

No time for losers.  
‘Cause we are the champions of the world!”

The famous song from Queen blasting out  
fro the pulpit...

It’s what all of us want to be...  
winners, champions, the one on  
the stand receiving the trophy.

Those who have had sand kicked in their face,  
and have still come through with  
a need to go on, and on, and on.

For us today, that person was John “the testifier.”

This John (not the baptist but the testifier),  
the one that declared, “Look, the Lamb of God!”

Then, then testified to the Spirit,  
which came and remained on Jesus.

John was the “champion” testifier. (Pause)

When his parents died, he was  
too young to be on his own.

Recall that Zechariah and Elizabeth were  
well into their golden years,  
when blessed by his birth.

So, when they died, tradition tells us  
that John went into the care of the Essenes.

Who lived in a little villages around the Dead Sea.

The Essenes fled the corruption that  
was going on in Jerusalem and,  
you could say, became religious fanatics  
that spent days and nights copying  
scriptures and writing scrolls  
that were found centuries  
later by archeologists.

So, John was taken into their care and instruction,  
and now years later he appeared in  
the wilderness of that same region  
proclaiming repentance for the

kingdom of God was at hand.

With such a background and prophetic mantel,  
John the testifier was a champion,  
a “rock star.”

He preached well and had gained a following.

With his mission being successful,  
I wonder, was John tempted?

Did the thought ever come to his mind about  
how he had a good thing going?

When he saw Jesus coming toward him,  
did he consider turning away or think to keep  
his head down?

That if he didn't say anything, and  
he could continue to grow in popularity  
and become even more successful.

Why step back and let someone else take over?

I wonder if these thoughts went through  
John's mind like they would have gone  
through mine. (Pause)

After all, being a champion is sought by

so many of us and it's a hard thing  
to walk away from.

Just ask Tom Brady, right? :-)

Ask any champion.

The hardest instrument to play in  
the orchestra (according to Elmer Bernstein)  
is "second fiddle." :-)

We want to be number 1, the champions! (Pause)

And that is why the first words out of  
Jesus' mouth in John's Gospel is  
"What are you looking for?"

On this second Sunday of Epiphany,  
the season of God revealing something new,  
we ask ourselves the same question:  
What are we looking for?

We are a rather mixed group, aren't we?

Scrappy and diverse in some ways,  
docile and homogenized in others.

So how is Christ manifest in us, or another way  
to ask the question is,

“How are we doing God’s will?”

Is it enough to come and hear your pastor  
belt out rock songs?

Probably not, though I do love it! :-)

So there are three points, I think to how  
we can be on a path to doing God’s will.

The first is in our Old Testament reading this morning.

In the Isaiah text we find “the servant’s mission.”

Though the identity of this person is  
somewhat concealed by God we find  
that God is waiting for the right moment  
to deploy the chosen one.

No, most Christians believe that  
Chosen One to be: Jesus, but  
we are wise to consider this to be  
a Christian interpretation and not a Jewish one,  
and besides that,

the text leans to imply that the servant’s mission  
may be a body of people or a culture of humans.

Israel, a nation and a name, is called on

by God to be a light and hope to the nations, too.

So, we can be such a bringer of hope, too.

A body of people; a community that pursues  
things in life that benefit others,  
not only ourselves, then,  
we are doing God's will. (Pause)

The second point to understanding how  
to do God's will comes in our psalm.

A song of deliverance and hope that includes  
waiting on the Lord with patience.

Not a "twiddling of the thumbs" waiting,  
but the kind that moves us to depth.

A depth of relationship with God and  
with each other and  
with other people.

Even the ones we struggle to be around.

Ugh, I know, but Christ is manifest even in  
people I don't agree with. :-)

And if Jesus asks you or me,  
"What are you looking for?"

We may struggle to answer.

Psalm 40 gives us a few really good answers:

We are looking for mercy...

we are looking for love...

we are looking for faithfulness...

And looking for these... means we don't  
hide them in our lives and actions  
with other people. (Pause)

Finally, the third point in understanding how  
to do God's will in this season of Epiphany is  
to continually "Come and see."

1. The servant's mission.
2. An active waiting with patience.
3. Continuing to Come and See.

This third one is Jesus' invitation  
to be always with Him.

The invitation to come and see,  
shows the way we can always  
be in participation with God.

Whether we are looking for a Teacher,  
Savior, Lord, or Friend we find  
that each identity invites new disciples

by simply showing up and being present.

(Pause)

On this Martin Luther King weekend, we celebrate  
and give thanks for his dreams, and  
for his witness, and for his sacrifice.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, as preacher,  
was more than just about a particular group.

He was one who offered more,  
to all of humanity, because he knew  
that war, poverty, and discrimination  
ultimately hurt all of us.

He proclaimed that what you do to one,  
you do to the other.

It's an epiphany that is still needing  
to be made known to the world.

AMEN!