

**SERMON**  
**Sunday January 18 2026**  
**John 1:29-42 – Epiphany 2A**

A few years ago, Pastor Sue and I attended a workshop called Fresh Expressions. It was happening in the winter. The group of participants were led outside and asked to put blindfolds on – with the exception of one person. That individual’s job was to direct the remaining participants from point A to point B. The only tool the leader had to use was their voice. The route was not a direct one, we had to go through quite a bit of snow whether we had boots or not, and the course instructor put obstacles in the way just to throw a wrench into things.

“Take three steps forward...stop...now slide two steps to the left. Keep your balance and blind fold on. Now go one step forward. Slide one step right. On a 45-degree angle to your right take five steps. Directions like this were given until the end was reached. When the participants took their blind folds off, they were surprised to find out that they had finished their exercise and they had gone around in a couple circles along the way. Following Christ is kind of like this exercise. God invites us to follow his directions so that we can be followers and disciples of Jesus. God helps us when we are lost to stay on the right path.

In today’s gospel lesson, John the Baptist’s disciples come looking for Jesus. He asks them “What are you looking for?” or from the Greek translation, “What are you seeking?” or “What do you hope to find?” And we might expand that to “What do you need? What do you long for? What do you hope for?”

It is a great question; one we rarely ask in church. Which is a shame because the culture – and particular the consumer culture – in which we live asks and answers it all the time. Except when culture asks the question, it’s not really a question, but a set-up to a prefabricated answer. “What do you need?” quickly becomes, “I know what you need – a new pair of running shoes, a more expensive car, whiter teeth, to lose ten pounds,” all of which we are told can be had for a price.

I believe you folks know better, of course. Deep down we know that wealth is counting all the blessings we enjoy that money can’t buy. So, I ask you as a

congregation to consider, “What does Zion really need, long for, hope for, and how might we offer those things? Is it silence in a world full of so much noise? Is it relationship in a world increasingly isolated? Is it community in an individual and lonely culture? Is it the chance to serve and be connected to others in a world that encourages us to put ourselves first? Is it hope for courage when headlines inspire fear and despair? Is it a Sabbath rest in a 24/7 world where relentless busy-ness has become a badge of honour and is regularly substituted for meaningful activity and necessary rest.

What is it that we most need and how can our congregation Zion provide it? No congregation can provide everything but I think it is not a bad thing to revisit our focus now and again.

The day after John describes who Jesus is, the Son of God, Beloved Child and Lamb of God, the future disciples of Jesus, Andrew and Simon Peter (who Jesus will later name Cephas which is translated Peter) begin their journey following Jesus. Jesus soon felt their presence asking them “What are you looking for?” They responded by asking the Rabbi, “Where are you staying?” Jesus replies not with directions but an invitation. “Come and see.”

The disciples wanted to hear the place name where they could come quickly and simply be with him. Instead of telling them the place Jesus does one better. He invites them to join him in his dwelling place. He invites them into a personal relationship with Jesus. His invitation is non-threatening. Come and see. It is inherently relational. And it is something any of us can say. Come and see.

I want to ask you. When you look into the world what do you see? What do you see in our community? On your way to work? To school? At Zion? Are we inviting others to come and see? Do we feel like children tugging on the hand of a guest – come and see my room, my toys, my baby brother: Are there places where people need an invitation to come and see?

I believe that the decline of our church traditions will stop the day a critical mass – and it doesn’t even have to be the majority, just a critical mass! – of our people a) know why they participate in church and b) can share with others. I challenge you to a new reformation, by first naming what you are seeking and longing for, determine to be a congregation that meets those deeper needs, and help one

another offer a simple three word invitation: Come and See. The point in the end is not to get more people into church or to stop the decline, but rather to invite people into the joy and life we have experienced in Christ.

And here's the thing: It's not just we who are offering this invitation. It is God in Christ working through us to invite others to abundant life so much richer than anything we can buy. It's God in Christ inviting us to that same life. Even if we struggle to name or understand or articulate our faith. Even when we opt for cheap substitutes we think we can buy or earn rather than receive the gift of faith from God. Even when we struggle to share our faith with others. Even when we wonder if we believe at all. Yet Jesus is still there, still asking what we most deeply need, still inviting us to come and see, and still determined to give us more than we can possibly imagine. Jesus simply will not give up on us ever. Ever.

Amen.