

Second Sunday after Epiphany

There is a quietness to these readings that can be easy to miss if we are not paying attention. No thunder, no fire from heaven, no crowds pressing in. Just a prophet speaking about being known before birth, and a man standing by a river pointing and saying, “Look.” The work of God here is not loud. It is revealed through recognition, through naming, through the slow turning of one life toward another.

Isaiah begins by addressing the coastlands, the far-off places, those who think they are outside the centre of things. “The Lord called me before I was born,” the servant says, “while I was in my mother’s womb he named me.” This is not the voice of someone who stumbled into God’s work by accident. It is the voice of someone who has discovered, perhaps to his own surprise, that his life has always been held within a larger purpose.

And yet the song does not rush toward triumph. There is a pause, almost a sigh, in the middle of it. “I have laboured in vain,” the servant says, “I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity.” This is not the language of easy success. It is the voice of someone who has tried to be faithful and is not sure it has made any difference at all. Someone who knows what it is to work hard, to hope deeply, and still to wonder whether it has been worth it.

If that sounds familiar, it is because it is the landscape most of us inhabit at one time or another. We do our best. We love people. We show up. We try to live with integrity. And still there are days when we wonder whether any of it matters. Isaiah does not dismiss that feeling. He includes it. Faithfulness, the prophet suggests, does not protect us from discouragement. What it does offer is trust: “Yet surely my cause is with the Lord.” Not success. Not recognition. Trust.

Then the voice of God answers, and the horizon widens. “It is too light a thing,” God says, “that you should be my servant to raise up

the tribes of Jacob.” Too small. Too narrow. Too easily contained. God’s purposes, it turns out, are larger than the servant imagined. “I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

This is not about ambition. It is about scope. God’s work refuses to stay local, private, or predictable. God is always doing more than we think we signed up for.

When we turn to the gospel, the scene is equally understated. John the Baptist is standing with two of his disciples when Jesus walks by. There is no dramatic introduction. John does not stop the crowd or call for attention. He simply says, “Here is the Lamb of God.” That is all. No explanation. No argument. Just a gesture, and a name.

And that is enough.

The disciples follow Jesus, not because they understand what “Lamb of God” means, but because something in John’s recognition stirs their own curiosity. Jesus turns and asks them a question that is deceptively simple: “What are you looking for?”

It is one of those questions that sounds straightforward until you try to answer it. What are you looking for? Certainty? Meaning? Healing? Belonging? A reason to hope? Jesus does not assume he knows. He asks.

Their reply is cautious, almost shy: “Rabbi, where are you staying?” They are not ready for big answers yet. They just want to know where he abides, where his life is rooted. And Jesus does not give them a lecture. He gives them an invitation: “Come and see.”

That invitation has not expired.

They spend the day with him, and something happens in that ordinary time together. Andrew is changed enough that the first thing he does is go and find his brother. “We have found the

Messiah," he says. Not *I* have found. *We* have found. Faith, from the beginning, is something that grows in relationship.

Jesus looks at Simon and gives him a new name. Not because Simon has earned it, but because Jesus sees who he is becoming. "You are Simon... you are to be called Cephas." Identity here is not fixed by the past; it is opened toward the future.

If there is a thread that ties Isaiah and John together, it is this: God calls people before they are ready, names them before they understand, and sends them into a world larger than their own imagining. The servant is known before birth. The disciples are named before they know what following will cost them. God's light does not wait for us to feel confident or qualified.

Which may be both comforting and unsettling.

Comforting, because it means our doubts and discouragements do not disqualify us. Unsettling, because it means God's call may not fit neatly within our plans. It may ask more of us than we expected. It may take us further than we intended to go.

Epiphany is the season of revelation—not just about who Jesus is, but about who we are in relation to him. It is the season when the light spreads, when the circle widens, when the invitation goes beyond what feels manageable. A light to the nations, God says. Come and see, Jesus says.

And here we are, somewhere between those two voices. Known, named, and still figuring it out. Wondering whether our efforts matter. Unsure what faithfulness will require next.

The good news is that we are not asked to see the whole road at once. We are asked to follow the light we have been given. To listen when someone points and says, "Look." To stay with Jesus long enough for something in us to shift. To trust that even when our labour feels in vain, God is doing more than we can see.

It is too light a thing, God says, to keep this to ourselves.

So we keep walking. We keep watching. We keep inviting others, not with answers neatly tied up, but with the same simple words we were given:

Come and see.