

2 Epiphany 15 January, 2023

Isaiah 49:1-7

Listen to me, O coastlands,
and give attention, you peoples from afar.
The LORD called me from the womb,
from the body of my mother he named my name.
² He made my mouth like a sharp sword;
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;
he made me a polished arrow;
in his quiver he hid me away.
³ And he said to me, "You are my servant,
Israel, in whom I will be glorified."^[a]
⁴ But I said, "I have labored in vain;
I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;
yet surely my right is with the LORD,
and my recompense with my God."
⁵ And now the LORD says,
he who formed me from the womb to be his servant,
to bring Jacob back to him;
and that Israel might be gathered to him—
for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD,
and my God has become my strength—
⁶ he says:
"It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to bring back the preserved of Israel;
I will make you as a light for the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."
⁷ Thus says the LORD,
the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One,
to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation,
the servant of rulers:
"Kings shall see and arise;
princes, and they shall prostrate themselves;

because of the LORD, who is faithful,
the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”

Psalm 40:1-11

¹ I waited patiently up- | on the LORD;*

he stooped to me and | heard my cry.

² He lifted me out of the desolate pit, out of the | mire and clay;*

he set my feet upon a high cliff and made my | footing sure.

³ He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise | to our God;*

many shall see, and stand in awe, and put their trust | in the LORD.

⁴ Happy are they who trust | in the LORD!*

They do not resort to evil spirits or turn | to false gods.

⁵ Great things are they that you have done, O LORD my God!

How great your wonders and your | plans for us!*

There is none who can be com- | pared with you.

⁶ Oh, that I could make them | known and tell them!*

But they are more than | I can count.

⁷ In sacrifice and offering you | take no pleasure;*

you have given me | ears to hear you;

⁸ burnt-offering and sin-offering you have | not required,*

and so I said, "Be- | hold, I come.

⁹ In the roll of the book it is written con- | cerning me:*

'I love to do your will, O my God; your law is deep | in my heart.'"

¹⁰ I proclaimed righteousness in the great | congregation;*

behold, I did not restrain my lips; and that, O | LORD, you know.

¹¹ Your righteousness have I not hidden in my heart;

I have spoken of your faithfulness and | your deliverance;*

I have not concealed your love and faithfulness from the great | congregation.

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes,

² To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— ⁶ even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— ⁷ so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸ who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

John 1:29-42

²⁹ The next day he (John) saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' ³¹ I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." ³² And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³ I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son[Ⓜ] of God."

³⁵ The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶ and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" ³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" ³⁹ He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.[Ⓜ] ⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus[Ⓜ] was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). ⁴² He

brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter[Ⓜ]).

Message: What Are You Seeking?

In working with different pastors and commentary writers, a common observation about the gospel of John emerges: when reading the gospel, if you wonder if there might be something significant in his word choices and metaphors, his repetitions, or details, the answer is, "Probably!"

Take for example the question that John has recorded Jesus asking of the two disciples of John the Baptist as they draw near – "*What are you seeking?*" They are the very first words Jesus speaks in the gospel account. That's important! It's not a simple question, and if we reflect on it for a moment, we realize that the response of these two former disciples of John the Baptist, "*Where are you staying?*", is not simple, either. We, who are wearied by the changes and chances of life, seek to escape the pervasive temporality and ultimately the death that marks our existence. When we answer the question, "What are you seeking?" with the plea, "Where are you staying?", it discloses what each of us on the deepest level are seeking: mankind has an innate longing to stay, to remain or abide with God.

Jesus's response to their question reflects theological themes that repeat through out John's gospel: "Come and see." "*So they came, saw and stayed with him for it was the 10th hour...*". Again, repeated phrases and innocent details are neither coincidental nor innocent in John. For John, following Jesus, coming to him, seeing, and believing, are all ways of referring to the same thing: faith!

The implication of the disciples staying, remaining, abiding *because it was the 10th hour* suggests that it was the eve of the Sabbath, the day of rest. The restrictions on travel on the Sabbath day would have prevented them from journeying further or returning to their own homes. And so they stayed, they abided, they rested and remained with him.

And it is their staying that brings deeper insight. Time spent with Jesus tends to bring clarity to the questions we raise. By the time Andrew and his companion left Jesus' presence, they knew they had found what they were seeking – they had found the Messiah! And Andrew had found an approach to evangelism and outreach that would serve him the rest of his life: Andrew brought his brother Simon Peter to Jesus; he *brought him*. He didn't just invite him to a fall harvest dinner – he *brought him* to Jesus.

What are you seeking? Jesus will pose essentially that same question again to Mary Magdalene on Easter morning: "*Who are you seeking?*" What are you seeking this morning? What is the deep longing of your heart? Jesus wants you to draw near. He has turned and waits for us to approach with our desires. The more time we spend, the longer we stay, rest, abide with him, the deeper the question will penetrate, and the more profound Jesus' answer will be: "Come and see."

As we continue in the season of Epiphany, the time of illumination, we need to recognize that enlightenment through the work of the Holy Spirit is not always a flash-in-the-pan or an "Ah-ha!" moment. Epiphany is also the gradual growing awareness of who this Jesus is that comes in direct relation to the amount of time we spend, stay, abide, and remain with him.

The training in discipleship that Andrew and his companion received began with Jesus' inquiry: "*What are you seeking?*" It continues as they go, see and stay. It will be completed when they see his glory and believe in him. May it be so with us.

Thanks be to God.

Prayers of the Church

Let us pray that the light of Christ may shine upon the Church, the world, and all people according to their need.

A brief silence

Thank you, Father, for Jesus. Thank you for making him our doorway into your heart. Thank you for making him your dear Lamb, the sacrifice for our sin. Thank you for making him the light of the world, and of our lives. Lord, in your mercy, **please hear our prayer.**

Lord, cause your Church to preach like John the Baptist. May it always point to Jesus, and say, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Prune away every program or teaching that does not serve that end. Let Jesus use the Church to draw new disciples to himself, and to shape them into his likeness.

Lord, in your mercy, **please hear our prayer.**

Make disciples of everyone in this congregation. Help us to use our spiritual gifts to glorify you and build up our community of faith. Make us bold to tell others, "We have found him of whom the Scriptures speak! Come and see the Son of God who takes away the sins of the world!"

Lord, in your mercy, **please hear our prayer.**

Bless the Church wherever it is persecuted on account of Jesus. By its patient witness, turn its enemies from hatred to repentance. For missionaries throughout the world, for our seminaries, church colleges, and schools, and for all who seek to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed, we also lift our hands, hearts, and voices in fervent supplication. Lord, in your mercy, **please hear our prayer.**

Tomorrow we commemorate the life of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Thank you for his witness. Teach us to value one another not based on race, creed, or gender, but because you have created all people in your image, and have given your Son as the sacrifice for all our sin. By your Holy Spirit, make the content of our character reflect your will, so that we treat each other with respect, justice, and charity. Lord, in your mercy, **please hear our prayer.**

Enlighten the minds and purify the hearts of those who take counsel for the nations. Turn them from the idols of power, prestige, and ideology, and teach them your ways. Heal the divisions that beset our country. Bestow your favor upon it, so it may be a beacon of righteousness, justice, and freedom for all. Lord, in your mercy, **please hear our prayer.**

Stoop down, O Lord, and hear the cry of all who are afflicted by suffering or sorrow of any kind, especially Pr. David Andreae, Amy Cooper, Claire Littlefield, Pr. James Puotyual, Delores Rodela, Norma Schlee, and Donna Schminke. Lift them out of their desolation; make their footing sure; and put a new song into their mouths. Restore them to all who love them. Let them proclaim your merciful deliverance. Lord, in your mercy, **please hear our prayer.**

Most gracious Father, thank you for those who have died to us, but whose lives are safely in your hand. Sustain us with that same strong and merciful hand. Help us trust and follow Jesus as he touches the lives of those who need him so much. Sustained in fellowship with Christ and his family, may we be found guiltless on that day when he is revealed to the world. Then, make us fit to dwell with him in the glory he shares with you and the Holy Spirit forever. Lord, in your mercy, **please hear our prayer.**