

## COME AND SEE

So, I was talking with a colleague the other day, and he said to me, “I know where you can find Jesus.”

“Really?” I responded. “That’s cool, because I’ve been looking for him and I can’t find him anywhere. Can you tell me where he is?”

He pointed over my shoulder and said, “Look. He’s over there.”

I turned around, but I didn’t see him. All I saw was our church building. “What are you talking about?” I said. “Jesus isn’t over there. That’s just my church.”

“You’re not looking hard enough,” my colleague said. “Jesus is over there. And I heard a voice somewhere in the wind say, “Come and see.”

I walked all over the church parking lot and looked around. Maybe it was me. Maybe I was just too blind or too stupid to see, but for the life of me I couldn’t find Jesus. I searched to and fro, here and there. I felt like I was searching for a lost dog or a stray cat. I got kind of frustrated. What was I supposed to do? Hang up posters with Jesus’ picture on telephone poles up and down the Black Point Road and over on the Hannaford Supermarket community bulletin board, with the words, “*Have You Seen Me?*”

I walked into the food pantry. Ellen, Karen, Penny and other volunteers were busy bagging up food items for the clients that were experiencing what is now called “food insecurity.” That’s what we used to call “hunger,” but I guess we’re trying to keep it under wraps that the richest country in the world has so many people—including kids—who struggle to come up with their next meal.

In between serving her clients I said to Ellen, “I’m looking for Jesus. He’s supposed to be around here somewhere. Have you seen him?”

“I’ve been kind of busy Fred, and my attention has been focused on the people who have come here for food, so I can’t say where exactly he is right now; but he’s probably around here somewhere.” Suddenly some words came into my mind. “I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat.”

Just then I heard laughter coming from one of the Pied Piper nursery school rooms. Vicky was reading a fun story to her class. It sounded like the kids were having a wonderful time. I’m sure they felt loved and accepted and cared for at Pied Piper. I don’t think they were being taught about the Christian faith, but from what I observed they were having a positive experience in a church environment.

And that's when I heard voice from somewhere whisper, "Let the little children come to me, for to such belongs the Kingdom of God."

I left the Parish House and went over to the church office. So far, my search for Jesus was a bust. I walked through the door and Elaine smiled at me and said, "Just the person I'm looking for. There's someone here who wants to speak with you." It was a rather scruffy looking young woman with disheveled hair and clothes that had definitely seen better days. And I probably shouldn't say this, but she didn't smell very pleasant, either. She an embarrassed expression on her face.

She was looking for help, of course. She was on her way to Massachusetts to live with her parents, and she needed money to buy enough gas to get her there. "I've never asked for help from a church before and I'm nervous doing this," she said. "But my son is outside in the car and . . ." Her voice trailed off. I told her to wait there a minute, and I would be right back. I took \$40.00 from my discretionary account and gave it to her. Her face radiated delight and surprise.

"Thank you so much. You don't know how much this means to me. This is really going to help me. I almost forgot what it's like for someone to be kind." She gave me a hug, turned and headed out the door. "Thank you," she said again, and blew me a kiss. Then she got in her car, with her son sitting in the passenger seat, and drove off.

I was pretty confident that the woman was sincere, and it felt good to be able to help someone in need. But that incident still didn't help me solve the mystery of where I could find Jesus. He was being so elusive. Where was he? And why was he hiding from me?

"Jesus, where are you staying?" I said out loud, having forgotten that I was in the office and wasn't alone.

"What was that?" Elaine asked.

"Oh, I'm just talking to myself," I said.

Suddenly a Bible story popped into my mind. It was the story of the feeding of the five thousand, when it was getting late in the day and the disciples told Jesus he really should send all these people away because it was time for them to go home and get something to eat. And Jesus said, "You give them something to eat."

Well, the week passed by quickly, and soon it was Sunday. I still hadn't seen Jesus, and I'd just about given up hope that I ever would. But I put that out of my mind because it was time for me to focus on the worship service.

I came upstairs from the vestry in full ministerial garb, climbed the steps to the altar and set my papers on the pulpit. Then I gazed around the sanctuary and looked at the people sitting in the pews. Like you are, this morning. They were all there for the same reason I was. They too, were looking for Jesus.

But I was at a loss as to how to help them find the Lamb of God. If I couldn't see Jesus myself, how could I possibly lead them to Jesus?

And then, as I sat down on my throne and bowed my head to pray, an inner voice spoke to me once again. It said . . . "When two or more are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them."

In this morning's reading from John's Gospel, Andrew had it easy. John the Baptist told him and another person, "Look, the Lamb of God!" and all they had to do was turn around, and they could see Jesus. In the flesh. Then the two men walked up to Jesus and Andrew asked, "Lord, where are you staying?"

Jesus said, "Come and you will see." And Jesus showed them. He walked them right to the place where he laid down his head at night, and Andrew and the other man spent the day with him.

But it's different for us today. We don't have a John the Baptist directing our attention "over there" and saying, "Look, the Lamb of God!" When we ask Jesus where he's staying, there's no definitive answer from him such as, "Come and you will see." When we look around to find the Messiah, to discover where he's living now, in 2020, Jesus doesn't give us any clear, concise directions; when we ask where Jesus is staying, he doesn't place his arm around our shoulder in a friendly manner and say, "Come and I'll show you."

No, for you and me today, finding the Messiah is more subtle and less certain than it was for Andrew and that other unnamed individual. We have to sort of look for clues and pick up little hints of Jesus' presence that come to us in our lives. But the clues and hints are out there for us to discern. So, when I ask Jesus, "Where are you staying?" here's what I hear him say in response:

I'm in the hearts of the hungry and the poor and the social rejects: "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was in prison and you visited me."

"I'm in the ministries your church performs: "When you feed and nurture them, I promise I will be there in spirit and multiply your meager resources so the needs of many, of the modern day 5000, can be met." And I'm in your midst right now, at this worship service. Because I have promised that "When two or more are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of you."

It's in the midst of such activities and ministries and acts of compassion that we find Jesus today. And when we recognize that, and we see Jesus present with us, we will be able to tell others, just as Andrew told his brother Simon Peter, "We have found the Messiah. Come, and see."

Thanks be to God. Amen.