

## Epiphany 2 sermon by Andrew 19 Jan 2020

Isaiah 49: 1-7; 1 Cor 1: 1-9; John 1: 29-42

Andrew was Simon's brother and he brought Simon to Jesus.

Who brought us to Jesus? Thinking about this, I've enjoyed remembering people who influenced me as a teenager and then throughout my life. I gave my heart to Jesus, aged eleven, at a Scripture Union camp, on that occasion being held in a temperance, teetotal, hotel near Alloa (the first and last time I've ever been in a temperance hotel). It was the time when the Good News Bible had just been published (a Bible you could actually read as opposed to the Bible at home with miniscule print which no-one read) and books like "The Cross and the Switchblade" about a young Pentecostal pastor reaching out to street gangs in New York, "God's Smuggler" (Br Andrew smuggling Bibles behind the Iron Curtain – exciting stuff) and "The Hiding Place" (Corrie Ten Boom's story of how her family hid Jewish friends during the Nazi occupation of Holland).

Those books and people brought me to Jesus. They made Jesus come alive for me. And people have gone on doing that for me ever since. Not so much people who do dramatic, exciting things, but often quiet people, sometimes elderly or housebound people – people who are prayer warriors in that secret place that Jesus speaks of and who hold the rest of us and the rest of the world before God, even when we're not aware of it.

In our Gospel we watch people being brought to Jesus in a way that's quiet (there's no big fanfare) but also dynamic at the same time. John points two of his disciples to Jesus. One is Andrew; the other is probably John, the beloved disciple, who's writing this Gospel, looking back on the story. They spend the day with Jesus and this is enough for Andrew to reach the point of saying: "We have found the Messiah." Jesus had invited them to "Come and see". Now Andrew reaches out to his brother with the same invitation.

It's a perfect Gospel for an AGM Sunday, because it goes to the heart of why we're here. We're here because somehow, through someone, we've heard the invitation of Jesus to "Come and see". Something's drawn us here. As I've gone around visiting (and it's been great to come and see you – it means a lot) I've heard wonderful stories about what brought us here. Family members and friends, relationships with different priests maybe, the ministry of the Franciscans – which we're hoping to reconnect with a bit through our retreat in May – and there's all those people we've loved whose prayers have filled this place and whose presence we still feel. We're here, whether we realise or not, because we were drawn here, invited. And then met by the Lord who week by week, day by day, moment by moment speaks in our hearts: "Come and see".

That's the faith that's sustained us through what's been a challenging year, saying goodbye to Ruth, trying to work out what the future might look like, a testing time involving some difficulties we'd never have expected. But through it all your Vestry and this congregation, you've never lost faith. Supported by Eileen and Nicola and Kenneth and other priests, everyone has pulled together and kept on looking to the future with hope. Our attendance never dropped right through the year which is an amazing

testimony to everyone's commitment and to your love for this community of faith and your love for the Lord who's in your midst and who in good times and hard times alike calls us: "Come and see".

And so this Gospel stands both for the year that's just ended and for the year we're looking ahead to. Could these words, "Come and see" be our inspiration for this year? How good would that be? So the primary task for Vestry and for all of us is going to be thinking about how we might share that invitation with the community around us. And that could mean looking at how we advertise what we do and who we are, how we use social media, how we work with ecumenical partners (like the Methodists round the corner – our first cousins in faith), how we pull in the diocese to help us, whether we might think about something like Messy Church (maybe we could do that together with our Methodist friends), or we offer another service during the week or maybe a monthly evening service. Our task is to listen deeply to what Jesus is inviting us to do here, as it were, on our watch, in our time. And not take on a whole lot of different things and exhaust everyone, but try to discover the right things for us, which might mean a bit of trial and error.

But what we need is that forward-driven energy of the Gospel. John points Andrew and the other disciple to Jesus; Andrew brings Simon; two verses from the end of this Gospel, Jesus calls Philip, next verse Philip invites Nathaniel. That's how it goes. That's our commission. Remember the Samaritan woman at the well, her of the five husbands, who after her encounter with Jesus, just can't contain herself and she runs to her neighbours : "Come and see someone who told me everything I ever did!".

This faith is infectious and we can have confidence in it because here we're offering something very precious: a loving fellowship of people who care about each other and don't judge, a community that's open to the world and to the newcomer, the kind of community Paul was talking to when he writes that he gives thanks for them because they've been enriched and strengthened in faith.

That sets our agenda for this year. It's a wonderful agenda. It's a Gospel agenda. St David's is Good News for this place; we are Good News, because at the heart of everything is the One who invites us: Come and see. Amen.