

Sermon for January 19, 2014

Second Sunday after Epiphany, John 1:29-42

BLESSINGS TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER, OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Traditionally we Lutherans have **not** been known for our evangelizing skills. We are good at being the first ones in and the last ones out when it comes to **disaster** relief, we are good at social justice and advocacy issues such as: **world hunger-the war on HIV and AIDS and Malaria**, and we here at Eden are **excellent** at taking care of those in our congregation who are in a time of need.

The other day **when** I was at a retreat I was asked by the Inland Congregations United for Change, an group working with an **ecumenical** cross section of pastors in the Inland Empire, to talk about just **how well** we Lutherans focus on issues of **social justice** within our community and the world. Thanks to the **ELCA** website I was able to come up with a rather impressive list of what we Lutherans **DO** in the world.

I have to say that here at Eden--**Harvey Clark** does a good job as head of the Evangelism team—he gets out there to do what he can by **entering** the model float of our church in the annual **Veteran's Day** parade here in Riverside as well as promoting our church in the community when and where he can. There are others

of you who are also doing an excellent job of getting information out to the community of what Eden Lutheran Church is doing.

All these things are wonderful and we are to be **commended** for our efforts—but just how good are we at inviting people to worship with us **one on one**—saying, “Come and see”, “come and see what we Lutherans are all about”, “come and see what our God, our church, and our congregation has to offer your life”, or “come and see how God can change your life”. I know in the past **I** have not been very successful at it. How good am **I** at getting out the ‘good news’ of Jesus Christ out to the community? I have to say that before becoming a pastor my track record was not so good.

Many times in youth group we talk about how we **DO talk or DO NOT talk** about our religion with our friends and is religion **EVER** a topic of conversation. Sometimes it is not easy nor comfortable for many of us to share our faith stories. In this world today I believe it is harder than ever to talk with others about who we are as believers in God and Jesus Christ with the **opposition** that Christianity is facing on many fronts. Not only do a good number of us have **little experience** in evangelism but in many cases we are downright frightened of it!!!!

If we look closely at **today’s** gospel reading evangelizing was not a problem for John the baptizer the day after Jesus had been baptized by him in the Jordan River. When Jesus was walking toward him John declares, *“Here is the Lamb of*

God who takes away the sin of the world!” Then he went on to testify to all that he had seen the day before, *“I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. And I, myself, have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.”*

The **next** day after that John, along with **2** of his disciples, watched Jesus walk by and he testified again, *“Look, here is the Lamb of God!”* (Which by the way—in this text are the **only 2 times** in the **whole** bible where the phrase ‘*Lamb of God*’ is used to describe Jesus.) The disciples followed Jesus—they wanted to **know more about** this man. And here in these **next 2 verses** we have a conversation which is the **whole basis** of John’s gospel. We read, *“When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, ‘What are you looking for?’ They said to him, ‘Rabbi, where are you staying?’* These are not just questions of logistics and location. These are two deeply spiritual questions which evoke thoughts of **intimate, enduring relationships**. Then Jesus said to them, *‘Come and see.’* Jesus’ statement for them to come and see is an **invitation** and in this invitation there was a decision to be made by the disciples. Come—**abide** with me, come—**learn** what I have to teach you, come—**talk** a little while, and you will see. For you see, there was something at stake for them in their decision. We are told they choose to come and see where Jesus was staying and they stayed with

him that day. Then Andrew went to get his brother, **Simon**, said told him, “*We have found the Messiah.*”

This is evangelism at its finest. John the Baptist **proclaims** who Jesus is as the ‘*Lamb of God, the Son of God, and the one who takes away the sin of the world*’, the 2 disciples came, saw, they followed Jesus to where he was staying to **begin** the relationship, and then Andrew **goes to tell** his brother, Simon, the good news, “*We have found the Messiah.*” Simon **goes** to Jesus—Jesus **looks** at him and **immediately** the relationship begins. Oh, for us to be such evangelizers and bearers of the good news.

Noticing, sharing, and inviting are the **three** elements of evangelism.

Telling the good news of what God has done in the world to all who will listen.

How does this **noticing, sharing, and inviting** translate into **our** lives today since

we **do not** have Jesus physically walking around in our world? **Notice**—how

about if we **pay attention** to those things in our lives where we **see or feel** the

presence of God or maybe we can become **more aware** of those places where God

needs to be noticed? Then possibly over time we will develop the capacity to see

God in many aspects of our everyday lives and in the world. **Share**—I know most

of us are nervous about sharing our faith but how about this—turn to your neighbor

to your right and share one thing you like about this church or why you come here

on Sunday mornings. Hopefully that won’t be too scary. *(Give a minute for them*

to do this.) And finally **Invite**—that can be the **hardest** one of all—I know that for sure. **Think** about the things we invite people to do all the time: go to a **movie**, go to out to a **meal**, **join** a club or group, to go and play golf. Most of us are really **pretty good** at inviting people to **do** things—how about inviting them to **come to church**? Our task is to simply think about who might **also enjoy** hearing the *Good News of Jesus Christ*.

In our gospel text for this morning John the Baptist **simply noticed and shared** the **wonder** of what he saw, Jesus **gained** his first disciples—people who will carry his message to the ends of the earth, and Jesus **invited** them to come and see—see what God has to offer them. Andrew **told** his brother to **come** and meet Jesus.

God takes **delight** in the little things and **through** them miracles are achieved. Our initial attempts to **share** our faith, our initial attempts to **tell** others what we have seen and felt may **seem** like very small efforts but saying, “*Come and see*”, “*come and see what we Lutherans are all about*”, “*come and see what our God, our church, and our congregation has to offer your life*”, or “*come and see how God can change your life*”. Those things can literally make **all the difference** in the world for someone who **needs** to hear the Good News of what God and Jesus Christ can do for them. Notice, share, invite and let God take care of the rest. **AMEN**

