

John 1:29-42a – Epiphany 2 – What Are You Seeking? – January 18, 2026

+In Nomine Iesu+

I want to talk about discipleship today. In our circuit pastors' meeting this week, one of the more seasoned pastors—and I suppose I am one of those too now—he said a sermon should always begin with a clear purpose statement so the congregation will know the point right away. So, that's what I am doing today. Discipleship.

In Luke 14, Jesus will say, “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.” And here Jesus calls us to count the cost, as we commit ourselves to following Him in His way. Discipleship should be informed and deliberate and intentional. And it should be a response to God's grace.

In our Gospel reading today, this idea of counting the cost comes as Jesus questions the First of His Twelve Disciples—as they leave the discipleship of John the Baptist to come to Jesus. John the Baptist is an interesting character. He lives an ascetic life out in the wilderness—more like a monk—that many modern day preachers. His life is full of silence, solitude, fasting, prayer, discipline, and the Holy Scriptures.

We will come back to some of these ideas later. But in our Gospel reading, as these men begin to look to Jesus, He asks a question, “What are you seeking?” And that question will give us some direction today.

We celebrated the Baptism of Our Lord last Sunday—in this season of Epiphany. And we talked about the significance of Jesus' Baptism and our own. And in today's reading, we get John the Baptist's confession of faith in Jesus Christ. And this passage is still dripping with the water of Jesus' Baptism—even though he doesn't mention the Baptism precisely. It is subtle—and very much like how he deals with Holy Communion in John 6.

In our reading, John the Baptist says of Jesus, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” He says of Jesus, “I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.” And he even mentions that Baptismal moment, “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.”

In addition, today, the church commemorates the Confession of St. Peter. If you are working through our devotional book *Celebrating the Saints* with us, you will want to read today's devotion. Peter's confession is in keeping with what the Father says at the Baptism.

In Matthew 3, we hear the Father confess, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” And now, Peter gives us that central confession of the historic church. He responds to Jesus' question, “Who do you say that I am?” with, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Peter get it right—at least for a moment.

In our reading, John the Baptist continues his role as witness by speaking to his own followers about Jesus. This was always the intention of his ministry. Here, he sends his followers to Jesus. The first two peel off and seek out Jesus. One of these followers is Andrew. And Andrew quickly goes and finds Peter his brother.

As I said, their introduction to Jesus begins with His question, “What are you seeking?” This is a deep question—especially in light of all that has just been revealed through the confession of John the Baptist. It is something akin to, “Why are you here?” “What do you expect of this?”

And maybe this is a good question for us as well. What are we doing here? What do we expect? What are we seeking? What does it mean to be a Disciple of Jesus Christ?

Clearly, here, Jesus is calling Disciples to Himself. John 1 gives us the first listing of some of the Twelve. We see Andrew and Peter. And if we were to keep reading in this same chapter, we would meet Philip and Nathanael. Next week, we will get a little more detail from Matthew 4—about Andrew and Peter—and also James and John. In this context, Jesus calls them to Himself, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

But the language of John 1:38 is explicitly the language of discipleship. These two disciples follow Jesus. Jesus responds by questioning them—as we have noted. And then He says, “Come and you will see.” This language is consciously designed to describe discipleship. To *follow*, to *come and see*, and to *stay or remain*, each describe aspects of discipleship. Very similar language will be used for Philip and Nathaniel.

The word *disciple* is interesting. Now, we know a little bit about the lives of these men from the Scriptures, from history, and from tradition. They would leave behind the life they had before. They would embrace the way of Jesus. They would change their priorities—and the way in which they viewed the world.

Paul often talks about the hardship he faced as a follower of Jesus Christ. There was a true cost for His discipleship. It’s not an easy thing.

In 2 Corinthians 11, he says, “Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.”

Now, as disciples, we don’t have to go out and look for trouble. And travel, food, and lodging are much easier in our day—thanks be to God. There is even a good chance that we are not going to face the same kind of violent opposition for following Christ. Although it does happen from time to time.

But discipleship does still require something of us—even everything of us. Following Jesus means personal sacrifice. It requires setting aside some old worn-out ideas. And Jesus wants us to think it through. And I want to talk about one particular aspect of discipleship that I mentioned earlier—a change of the way in which we view the world. To live as a disciple is to resist the dominant imagination of the age. It is a change in what we see as important.

And it all begins with the confession of John the Baptist—and the confession of St. Peter. I appreciate the clarity and precision of these statements. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And this is what the church is doing with the Nicene Creed today. We have something to say about God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And our confession brings us into the way of discipleship—we are following the Jesus revealed to us in the Scriptures.

But, the crisis of our age is not simply unbelief. That’s bad enough. But we have fallen into forgetfulness. We have stopped caring about the things of God. We have forgotten our roots. We have forgotten what kind of world we inhabit. Humanity has forgotten that we

were made for a right relationship with God—first commandment stuff—which happens through Jesus Christ—and through Him alone.

I have been struggling with the idea of passivity in the church—especially in regarding discipleship—and the disciplined life. We are right to say that before God, our righteousness is passive. Everything begins with Him. The cross means everything. Salvation is always and only His work. To stand right before God is something that He must provide. We must be declared righteous. Grace is a gift.

But Jesus was also demanding something of His followers. I mentioned Paul. But Jesus says things like, “Any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.” He says, “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” He says, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Jesus expects His disciples to pray on the night of Gethsemane. He expects His Disciples to fast—once He has ascended into Heaven. Jesus sends His Disciples out as witnesses in the world. He expects His Disciples to live the Sermon on the Mount. He expects his Disciples to endure to the end.

Jesus expects His followers to be disciplined. We are to know our theology. We are to speak well and often of Christ. But there are these personal spiritual disciplines that mark the Christian life—things that require our active participation.

I like the way Paul says it in 1 Corinthians 9, “Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”

This requires discipline. Silence—fasting—prayer—reverence—attention—communion. These are not antiquated practices; they are acts of resistance against a world that trains us to be distracted, utilitarian, and spiritually numb. Christianity does not invent a new meaning for life. It remembers the truth that has always been there—God intends life to be sacramental and spiritual. And God is always near to us in Jesus Christ.

We still have a few weeks until Lent. And in this time of the Epiphany—this time we when we acknowledge that Jesus has appeared in our world as a Light for all nations—I want us to start thinking of ourselves as followers of Jesus Christ—disciples. Disciples live a disciplined life—set apart from the world for the purposes of God. And let’s give some thought for what it means for us to grow in the spiritual disciplines to which we have been called by Christ.

I am going to have a suggest a specific *fast* for us to take up in this Lenten season. Now, I can’t control what you are going to do. And mandatory fasts can come turn into merely eating fish on Fridays because that is what we have always done.

Remember that fasting is about prayer—and it is about disciplining our thinking, and even our bodies. The hunger should remind us of our need for Christ. But this fast will specifically address our discipleship—and our attention. As I suggested, the crisis of our age is that we have forgotten the ways of Christ. We have forgotten what discipleship means. We have prioritized other things. And many of those things monopolize our lives to our great harm.

So, what is this fast? Well, I am not going to answer that today. I will address it in the February Newsletter. And again, on Transfiguration Sunday—the Sunday before the beginning of Lent—so that we are prepared when Ash Wednesday arrives.

I do hope that you are open to making changes in your life—as a follower of Christ. Not just fixing things that are broken—but drawing nearer to Christ. Instead of letting pop-culture—whether it is from the 50s, 80’s, or today—define our lives—and how we use our time—let’s get caught up in the life of Christ. Our lives should look a little more like John the Baptist’s life than our neighbor’s down the street.

The second half of our reading begins with the question of Jesus, “What are you seeking?” It’s a good question. And we should let it penetrate the whole of our lives—our actions, ideas, schedules, habits, and priorities. It should test the way that we view the world.

But the question also calls us to follow Christ. And since Christ has sought us out—since He has called us to follow Him—since He has called us to a life of discipleship—since He has washed away our sins—let’s follow Him. Let’s seek Him.

This kind of faith is ancient, sacramental, and deeply transformative. Not merely believed, but lived. Not static, but growing. Not abstract, but embodied—in the life of the Church—and in our daily discipleship—all by the grace of God. Let’s be His disciples. Let’s follow Jesus—heart and soul. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

+Soli Deo Gloria+