

Sunday January 18, 2026
Second Sunday after Epiphany

Sermon: "Come and See"

Theologians will tell you that Epiphany is a day – January 6th to be specific. Others will tell you that Epiphany is a season, it is the season between January 6th and Shrove Tuesday. Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent. One group says this is the season following Epiphany, that it is “Ordinary” time, the liturgical colour for which is green, and that it is a time of growth. I’ve always thought of this time as the season of growth that follows Epiphany, a day. But, taking a closer look at the readings so far has introduced an element of doubt. I’m open to admitting that there may be merit in considering this a season of Epiphany. I’m open to examining the evidence.

On Epiphany, we heard the story of the wise men or Magi who perceived, in the infant Jesus, God’s Chosen One who was sent for the salvation of ALL nations and peoples. Remember, the word epiphany means revelation, especially a divine revelation. What is the Sunday after Epiphany? The Baptism of Jesus. And what happened at Jesus’ baptism? A divine revelation. The Spirit of God descended, like a dove, and lit on Jesus, and a voice from the heavens said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, in whom I am well pleased.” Now, the second Sunday after Epiphany what do we read? *John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Chosen One.”* Another divine revelation. Another Epiphany.

As if that isn’t enough, when Andrew and another unnamed disciple of John the Baptist inquire after Jesus, Jesus said to them “Come and see.” Jesus was inviting Andrew and the other disciple to their own divine revelation as to his true identity. And no, the other disciple wasn’t Simon. The lesson says that Andrew stopped along the way and picked up his brother, Simon, before

going to see Jesus. All of this is starting to look like a good argument for calling this a season of Epiphany, or perhaps, better yet, the season of Epiphanies.

But what exactly is involved in an epiphany? If we start with Jesus' invitation to "come and see" what does that involve? It means more than simple passive observation. It involves physical effort to "come." It involves intellectual effort to discern what is being observed. It involves keeping an open mind about the possibilities being presented. It involves witnessing what is happening and being said, and then testifying or witnessing to what has been observed and heard. And then there is the divine part of it. Perhaps that is the part which put Andrew and Jesus in the same place at the same time and caused Andrew to inquire after Jesus.

This past week I experienced one of those moments of divine happenstance myself. The secretary of the board at Reynolds Creek United Church in Putnam sent me an email. "Do you have any information on Bill C-9 and if the United Church is encouraging us to sign the petition? How do you see our freedom of religion and the charter of rights and freedom in what is in C-9? I would appreciate your thoughts." The petition she is referring to, I presume, is the same one that we received from the Conservative Party of Canada. I now wish I had not discarded that letter with disdain so that I could read it to you now. It will just have to suffice to tell you that the gist of the letter was an argument that Bill C-9 would restrict religious freedom of expression and that clergy may well find themselves in the position of being open to prosecution by the government for what they preach. That is more than just a little unnerving. I decided that I needed to do a little more research to answer the questions posed. Time to do some searching, to keep an open mind, to do some serious thinking, and then sharing or testifying to what has been learned. Wait a minute, that sounds a lot like "come and see."

The website of the Justice Department of the Government of Canada has oodles of information about proposed Bill C-9. In it is this nugget of

information – **Definition of Hatred.** It says, and I quote, “*The bill would create a definition of “hatred” for two of the existing hate propaganda offences in section 319 (publicly inciting hatred where it is likely to lead to a breach of the peace and willfully promoting hatred), the new hate propaganda offence and for the new hate crime offence. The definition would specify that “hatred” involves detestation or vilification and does not mean disdain or dislike. The Bill further specifies that the communication of a statement does not incite or promote hatred solely because it discredits, humiliates, hurts or offends. This would codify decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada.*”

After searching, reading, and thinking, my response to the secretary of the board at RCUC is as follows. “Jesus would be filled with righteous anger were his followers to incite or willfully promote hatred, detestation, or vilification of anyone. The teachings of Jesus are the opposite; that every life is created by God and loved by God, and that we are to love our neighbour, whether friend or foe. There is no room for hatred in Christianity, so to suggest that there is, shows a complete and total lack of understanding of the Christian faith. This, I believe, is nothing more than fear mongering and an attempt by the Conservative Party of Canada to divide people from one another, as political parties south of the border have done. In the case south of the border division was sown to gain political power, and I believe that is what is behind the petition – an attempt to sow division to gain political power.” Here endeth my epiphany.

It is unlikely that you and I will ever be fishers on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, or that we will ever be disciples of John the Baptist, or that Jesus will just happen to walk past us and personally invite us to “come and see” what he is up to. However, it is certain that we will be put in situations where we will have a choice to turn away and ignore, or to observe, to think through, and to share, maybe even to risk our own safety in the process. Right now there are thousands of people in Iran showing up, observing, thinking, filming and trying to reveal to the world the oppressive and violent response of their government

when they feel their hold on power may be threatened. Likewise, there are thousands of people in the United States of America who are showing up, observing, thinking, filming and trying to reveal to the world the oppressive and violent behaviour their government is engaged in vis-à-vis its own citizens. It would seem to me that there is little to no difference between the behaviour of the Iranian regime and the American regime in this instance. Keep your power, at any expense, even at the cost of killing your own, the ones you are responsible to serve and to protect. And if caught: deny everything or reframe the victims as domestic terrorists.

What I'd like to know is, what ever happened to the Canadian directive, that I thought the UN had adopted, called "The Responsibility to Protect" which came out as a result of the genocide in Rwanda? It was supposed to lead to a multinational force that could intervene militarily, if necessary, to protect citizens from their own governments.

"Come and see." It wasn't just an invitation for Andrew and the other disciple of John. "Come and see," is an invitation for all people. It is an invitation extended by God to each and every person. Some will turn down the invitation outright. Some will turn their backs and ignore the invitation, pretending that they haven't heard it. Some will find an excuse to turn down the invitation – I have a new team of oxen that have never been yoked together to work up a field and I must try them out. Some will feign acceptance of the invitation and will tag along but won't give a second thought to what they are witnessing. And others, like Andrew, will not only accept the invitation, but they will consider what they see, they will examine it thoughtfully, and even take it to heart and make what they see a part of themselves. "Come and see," is the invitation God makes to you. How will you respond?