

This is Pr Heinz's message: Sunday, Jan. 15 2023

As you remember I had a knee replaced this past Monday

- successful it was
- I was home late Tuesday
- I appreciate all the kind prayers and best wishes folks have sent my way.
- well Wednesday morning I was still receiving a lot of well wishes
- And Wednesday the messages were more and more from people I did not know
- and Wednesday the tones of the messages were changing from "prayers for me" to
- telling me "If I turned to Jesus I my leg would heal up in no time"
- Turns out one of my old buddies was at it again
 - he shared my name and email with a list
 - hence the well wishes and prayers and invites to know Jesus
 - of course he means only the best
 - but in this case, his "style of evangelism" could be better
 - and rather conveniently, Jesus shares a better style in the Gospel reading today
 - which is where the good news for our lives and faith journeys can be found this morning

Please allow me to get right to my point. This is a perfect opportunity to contrast the style Jesus showed in the Gospel from John today with how some folks want to share Jesus with us.

- most importantly: did you notice Jesus's style in the reading?
- Jesus said "come and see": no threats, no force, but an invitation to come and see
 - and I just can't think of a better example for us to follow as 21st century followers of Christ are called to do
 - as when we follow Jesus and tell the world "Come and see"

So Here is what I hope to share today: (or Tom, Rod, or Bethanne wants to share today)

- an overwhelming aggressive approach to sharing a loving God is wrong
- and I think we make a huge mistake when we let that approach define faith or church for anyone
- and so the lesson here in John for today is straight up simple

-invite people as Jesus invited people. Invite people as Jesus invited people

You don't have to share my circle of friends or (trusted foes) to have experienced well-intentioned but misguided gospel proclamation

- I imagine more than a few of us have felt this way when we were in similar situations
- whether it was from a domineering in-law or casual acquaintance who asked the "have you thought about what happens when you die" question
- or from a well-meaning co-worker who asks "Have you accepted Jesus?"
- or the ever present at some picnics question: "are you saved?"
- well, much like most of rest of my friends, and most of the unchurched are just not much for evangelism which is coercive or threatening
- some of us are turned off from this approach because we think faith is not discussed in polite company or
- some of feel faith is a personal matter or
- and sometimes we don't want to be forced to talk about our faith in social settings because we don't want to be associated with people who constantly talk about **their** faith in every single social setting they are in

(-it is ok to laugh at this point)

-bottom line truth: this coercive approach that focuses on personal salvation isn't Jesus based, doesn't work for spreading the promises of the love and forgiveness and inclusion and salvation of the Christ child

- all it does is chase people away.
- it's just wrong,
- it's just a big mistake.

I will add this before I go on:

-a bit of caution or relief perhaps:

-if we're not pestering folks non-stop with our faith, we are not "doing it wrong".

-seems it is too easy to think that we are not good Christ followers because we don't like to and never will be uncontrolled extroverts

-because we all model our faith, and preach the news in different ways

-and to be clear, standing in front of the crowd is not for all of us. God just did not make us all the same

So, please Come and see Jesus's style in the reading if you would please

- this is the most important lesson ever for how to share Jesus, and it's so simple that it is difficult to believe

-in the reading, JTB John the Baptizer sees Jesus, and JTB shares what he saw

-yes, might be that simple

-John is showing us that when it comes to our relationship with Jesus,

-our primary job is to see and share.

-and Not to threaten, not coerce, not intimidate,

-or make promises or sales calls

-not woo or wheedle or plead,

-but simply to see and share.

-wait, is it that simple?

Well, yes, it just might be according to what we are reading here

-in the reading JTB sees and shares what he saw- The Spirit descending on Jesus. That's it.

-Later, Andrew sees Jesus, tells his brother what he had seen

-then later Andrew invites Peter to come and see...

-Notice that this isn't only what **John the Baptist** does,

- and it's not only what **Andrew** does.

-It's also what Jesus does.

- When Jesus notices some of John's disciples following him, he asks them simply:

- "What are you looking for?"

-Andrew replies with a question: "where are you staying?"

-and Jesus replies: "come and see"

-“come and see”.

-you do see how Jesus invites the curious, he does not threaten them?

- Not, "have you given your heart to me?"

-Not, "do you know the ten commandments?"

- And certainly not, "Do you know where you will spend eternity?"

-nope, Jesus says simply, "Come and see."

-is it that simple?

-yes.

-is telling others of the good news of Jesus that simple?

-yes, come and see.

-is inviting others into a faith life that simple?

-yes, come and see.

I can't tell you how many times I wish I would have answered a faith question with that phrase: “come and see”

-it is a perfect answer for when my non church friends ask what I do on Sundays

-it's a perfect answer for my friends who have no clue as to what we do in a church named for a powerhouse theologian of the Reformation (Luther)

-it's a perfect answer for friends who question faith life

-it's a perfect answer for folks who might want to, but don't understand why imperfect people like all of us gather on Sundays mornings to follow a character named Jesus

-it's a perfect answer because it gives the world the chance to see and feel and experience what really goes on in a Christ centered community.

-and my faith tells me...some of those folks who come and see, they will tell their friends and those friends will tell their friends.

-and as Anna says, “do the math and watch it grow.”

One last thing about the “come and see” invite

-it is 100% truthful

-it is easier because of that

-and (it is OK to laugh just a bit here) it's a good way to get out of “tricky faith questions” if you get trapped or tripped up

-so, say you're at family members place over the holiday
-a cousin asks "what do Lutherans believe?"
- (as if you could answer that question in less than a day)
-and you know your cousin well enough that he won't listen to anything you say, he just wants to follow up your answer by lecturing you for an hour on what HE believes.

-or let's say, at the same family gathering, your niece (the one who works as a programmer but thinks she is a theology expert) fell for the latest clickbait, watched a seven-minute video on the errors of Lutheranism, now she is standing between you and the baked ham, and she wants to discuss

(pause for a second here)

-in both of these situations, please go with the truth of the "come and see" invitation Jesus shared.

- in that way, it's the truth of Jesus that will answer their curiosities
- they will see how the good news shared right in front of them
- the Holy Spirit can work with them there and in the weeks to come,
- and you end up with more baked ham on your plate.

Word. Amen.