**Morning Praise @ Home 15 January 2023**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Readings Isaiah 49: 1 – 7 John 1: 29 – 42

### Reflection from John

This week, John’s gospel takes us to the day after Jesus is baptized. John the Baptist sees Jesus walking down the street, and points out the Lamb of God to some of his own disciples. It could have been a casual encounter. John might have said, “Here comes that guy I was telling you about earlier.” And his followers might have glanced up long enough to see who John was talking about, and gone right back to whatever it was they had been doing. It could have happened like that. But it didn’t.

The pattern of this story will play out time and again throughout Jesus’ ministry. It’s the perfect pattern for sharing our faith. It goes like this:

First, John the Baptist sees Jesus.
Second, he shows Jesus to others.
Then, John shares his own experience of Jesus.

The pattern gets repeated a couple of days later, when Andrew and the other disciple see Jesus and follow him. Then Andrew shows Jesus to his brother, Simon, and shares with Simon his own experience of Jesus. When Simon meets Jesus in person, he is changed. He becomes Simon Peter, the rock on which Christ will build his church.

**See. Show. Share.** At its heart, evangelism is noticing what God is doing in our lives, sharing that with others, and inviting them to come and see for themselves.

Why are we so afraid of sharing the Good News with others?

Presumably each of us has had some encounter with Jesus, or we wouldn’t be here right now. Think about it for a moment: how have you personally experienced Christ? How have you **seen** God in action lately?

John saw Jesus, and openly declared: “Here comes the Lamb of God, the One who takes away the sin of the entire world!” That’s quite a statement! But John had experienced something his disciples apparently had not, and he was eager to tell them about that experience. He wanted them to see it, too.

So, John told them what he had seen: the Spirit of God coming down from heaven like a dove, and resting on Jesus. He said, **“I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.”** He saw the Spirit rest on Jesus with his own eyes, and he recognized that Jesus was the One he’d been waiting for, the One he’d been looking for.

We are in the season of Epiphany, when we remember how Jesus was revealed to the wise men who came from the east. But it’s important to remember that the wise men saw the star because they had been looking for it. In order to see God among us, we have to be looking for God at work in our lives.

When John’s disciples went after Jesus, he asked them, **“What are you looking for?”** These are the first words Jesus speaks in John’s gospel. We heard the opening verse of John at Christmas: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God…” But that Word doesn’t actually utter a word until 38 verses later, and when he speaks, it’s this simple but profound question.

When Jesus asks Andrew and the other disciple, **“What are you looking for?”**it means a lot more than just**,**“Did you lose something? Can I help you find it?” Jesus is really asking, “What are you searching for in life? What is your soul’s deepest desire? What are you seeking with all of your being?”

Jesus asks us the same question. What are you looking for? What do you seek? What are you hunting for, to satisfy your soul’s deep longing?

When Jesus asks them, “What are you looking for?” the disciples of John don’t give him a great speech or a thoughtfully prepared mission statement. When they come face to face with Jesus, they suddenly realize that the thing they’ve been seeking is this man standing in front of them. They respond with a question of their own. **“Rabbi, where are you staying?”**

Again, this means more than, “What’s your current address?” They are really asking, “Teacher, what is it like to be with you? Is there room for us in your life? Can we come live where you live? Will you teach us?”

And Jesus invites them to **“Come and see.”** He invites them immediately into his life. He does this with the understanding that they may choose not to follow. Once they’ve seen his accommodations and had a taste of his teaching, they may not want to stay. But his invitation is open anyway. **Come, and see.**

When Jesus says, “What are you looking for?” he’s asking if **we** are ready to be disciples. If we are looking for comfort, or security, or some assurance that we are right, we might be looking in the wrong direction.

But if we want to be with him day in and day out from this moment and for all eternity, if we recognize that following Jesus is the only way to know the fullness of God’s love, then it just makes sense for us to want to spend every moment in Christ’s presence.

**Some people talk about inviting Jesus into our lives. But what if we turn that around, and realize that Jesus is welcoming us into his life?  Jesus invites us to come and see where he lives. He offers us the opportunity to become part of what he is doing.**

His invitation is open, but it’s up to us to follow, up to us to “come and see.”

Are you ready to go be part of Jesus’ life, so you can find what you seek? And once you’ve found Christ, then what?

It’s not enough to just ‘see’ Jesus. He calls us to show him through our lives as he changes us. He calls us to share the good news that he changes us.

Notice that it doesn’t take long for Andrew to go looking for his brother Simon to show him Jesus, to share with him what Andrew has experienced. And the instant Jesus meets Simon, he gives him a new name: Peter, or “Rock.”

Jesus gives each of us a new name the moment we meet him, too. We are called “Beloved” and “Child of God.” In 1 John 3:1 we are reminded of this new identity: “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”

You see, following Jesus wherever he goes, living with him, is the only way you are ever going to find what you are seeking. Entering into a life-long commitment to be part of Christ’s life is the only way you will ever fulfil that deep longing inside you. It’s a longing that you might not even be able to name. But it’s there.

Are you looking for an abiding and deep connection with the God who created you just so he could love you?

Jesus isn’t sitting around waiting for us to invite him into our lives. Instead, Jesus invites us into his life. With his “come and see” Jesus includes us in his Lamb of God work. Some people talk about how Jesus fills a God-sized hole in their lives. It’s not really about that. It’s about filling the you-sized place you can claim in God’s family by accepting Christ’s invitation into his grace.

A PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Lamb of God, you invite us into your life, to be with you, to learn from you, to abide in your love.
Help us to accept your invitation to grace,
knowing that it requires more of us than we are equipped to offer.
There is nothing we can do to save ourselves; it is your grace alone that saves us. Forgive us for trying to rule over our own lives.
Help us completely surrender to your love.
Grant that we may desire you more than anything.
Show us the way to the Father, that we may claim our place in your Kingdom as beloved children of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession**

Almighty God, we ask you to hear our prayers today for the church, the world, our local community and people in particular need.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, we pray for the Christian church throughout the world. We pray for Christians who are persecuted because of their faith and ask for your blessing on organisations who support them.
We ask for your blessing on all clergy in the Diocese of Chester. We ask you to strengthen and guide them as they lead their congregations.
We pray for our Parishes of St Nicholas and St. Michael. We ask for your blessing on our PCCs . We pray that you will show each one of them what role you want them to play in serving our church family and the local community.

In a moment of silence, please pray for any aspect of parish life which is particularly on your mind today.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer.**

Creator God, we pray for the nations of the world and their leaders.
We pray for all nations that continue to be torn apart by war, poverty and illness, and for all organisations that try to help the people living in these countries.

In a moment of silence, please pray for any country that is on your mind today.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for the staff and pupils of Bishop Wilson school and we pray that the children will become aware of your love for them.
We pray for the food bank and ask for your guidance on how best to reach those people who are in need.

In a moment of silence, please pray for any aspect of life in our villages that is on your mind today.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer.**

Loving God, we know that there are many people who are struggling due to illness, financial problems, loneliness or the loss of loved ones.
In a moment of silence, please pray for one person you know who is in particular need of God’s help today.
Merciful God, we ask you to draw close to all of those mentioned so that they may be aware of your healing presence, and to provide your peace and comfort for them at this time.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, strengthen our faith so that your presence may be seen clearly in all that we do and say each day throughout the coming week.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**