

Are You Listening? Jan 15th. John 1: 35-42.

The other night I was trying to help my son with his homework. He had a project to do for English, but he really didn't know exactly what to do. He wasn't sure if the format was an essay, or if he had to make a presentation; he didn't know how long it needed to be, or when it was due. And yet, he told me that the teacher had gone over the assignment in class. You see, Gavin, like so many other teenagers, just hadn't been listening.

Perhaps we are all a bit guilty of that. Can you recall a time when you know that someone was talking to you, or telling you something – and even though you were looking at them, and maybe even nodding as if you understood – in your head you were thinking about what you were going to cook for supper, if you needed to get groceries, about that phone call needed to make, or maybe some other chore that needed to do? You see, we are a society of people always rushing around, completing tasks at work and at home. We pride ourselves on our ability to multi-task.

But the problem is – if we are always busy – how do we hear God? The Psalmist tells us to “wait patiently for the Lord.” But do we do that? When do we take the time to stop, and listen?

In our reading today, there are numerous examples and reminders of how we have to listen. It begins with two disciples who had had stopped whatever they were doing and were ready to listen to John the Baptist. Andrew is one of them, and it is thought that the gospel writer John was the other. They were listening with anticipation since they knew the Hebrew prophecies about the coming Messiah. Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist and he would have heard his assertions that someone was to come who would offer a greater baptism: a baptism of the Spirit. He would have had a sense of expectation and he would have been on the alert for the one who was to come. And so, they were probably listening, with undivided attention, when they heard Jesus described as “the Lamb of God”. In verse 37, it tells us that :

When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. (John 1:37)

Now because Andrew was expectantly waiting for a sign from God. Waiting for the Messiah, perhaps his ears were more readily open to hear the message that John the Baptist was preaching. Perhaps he and the apostle John were ready to hear the Word of God, which caused them to turn and follow Jesus. But the essential thing is that – they listened – they heard – and they wanted to find out more!

Are we like that? Are we ready to listen? I know, that sometimes when the minister stands up and starts speaking, we sometimes begin to tune out. Remember, it wasn't long ago that I was sitting in the pews! We begin to think of other things that we have to do when we get home, chores, reminders, etc etc. And sometimes we can get glazed looks on faces. But if we don't listen, how can we expect to hear, or to respond?

The scripture continues with the theme of listening when Jesus turns to the two followers and asks them a question. In verse 38 it says:

Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" (John1: 38)

It's interesting that the English translations of this phrase obscure the meaning of the Greek; a better translation is, "What are you seeking?" That's what the two followers heard Jesus say. And I think it is a question that is still real for us today. I think that if we are willing to listen, then Jesus still asks us the same question: "What are you seeking?" What are you looking for? What do you want?

We live in a culture that is dominated by the acquisition of 'stuff', and where, for some people, the search for meaning is thought to be found in more 'stuff.' But is that what we are seeking? What does the question really mean for us, as people of faith? What do we, as the people of Knox church really want? What motivates us as the community of Ayr? And what do you, as an individual, really need, not just on the surface, but deep down into the core of your being? What are you looking for?

This question can, and should echo in us during our entire lives as followers of Jesus. If we want to be disciples, then we must do so intentionally. At all the important moments of our lives we must ask ourselves where we are in our searching. When we ask ourselves the questions, and only when we ask, can we truly realize what matters most for us, each day, each week, each month and year.

Think about it for a minute – if you heard Jesus ask you that question right now, what answer would you give to Jesus? What are you seeking? (pause)

When Jesus poses this question to two of John's disciples, they simply want to be with Jesus. And so, they answer "Where are you staying?" And when they ask this question, they are not asking Jesus for the location of his tent, or the address of the guest house at which he is visiting; they want to know about the enduring, permanent, eternal, dwelling place. Where are you staying? Where can we find you? Where shall we go to be with you, to receive what you have to offer? Where can we be in the very presence of God? They wanted to get to know *him*.

When Jesus answers in verse 39, we have our third chance to see if we are listening. Jesus says very simply in his answer:

"Come...and you will see" (John 1:39)

"Come and see." This answer captures a primary message of John's Gospel, and of all Christian life:

If you want to know the word made flesh, come and see Jesus.

If you want to know what love is, come and see Jesus.

If you want to experience God's glory, to quench your thirst with living water, to be born again, to know real love, to see the light of the world, . . . if you want to know God, come and see Jesus.

Jesus gave the invitation to Andrew and John to come and spend time with him. To get to know him. To hang out with him. We don't know exactly what they did that day, we don't know what Jesus told them, but we do know that they spent the day together. And we do know that in spending time with Jesus, Andrew and John realized that Jesus was the Messiah that they had been waiting for.

Jesus gives us that invitation still today. He wants us to spend time with him. He wants us to get to know him through prayer, bible study, worship, meditation ... and to get to know him through listening to him. Are you listening?

And ... when we do listen to God, and get to know him, we can, and we should, be filled with the same excitement that Andrew was filled with. It tells us in verse 41 that:

“the first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him.”

(John 1: 41)

The FIRST thing he did! He was so excited that he had met the Messiah, that he immediately wanted to tell others! Wow – that’s real evangelism. What a lesson for us.

But what is that we hear today? Do we hear a voice telling us to focus our attention on Jesus – the Lamb of God, the one who will bring us the Holy Spirit?

Do we hear Jesus asking us “what are you seeking?” – today, here, now.

Do we hear Jesus’ invitation to “come and see”. The invitation to come and spend time with Jesus and to get to know him.

Do we hear a call to join with Andrew and share our excitement with our neighbors – a call to reach out to others and bring them to know Jesus too.

What do you hear today? And remember – you can only hear, if you are listening!