

*Sermon preached by Revd Rachel McDougall*

*Epiphany 2A*

*19<sup>th</sup> January 2014*

*Sharing what we see.*

What do we like to share with other people? What can't we wait to tell others about – usually it is some piece of good news, something good that has happened in our lives or what has helped us. I could go on and on about the beauty of New Zealand and how uplifting it was.

And so John the Baptist can't wait to share his bit of good news.

Unlike other gospels in John's gospel there is no account of Jesus' baptism. Instead we hear John the Baptist bearing witness to Jesus.

John the Baptist shares what he hears and what he sees. John says 'Look here is the lamb of God!'

Look and see! He doesn't hold back, even when it is his *own* disciples that he's telling.

Look here he is! John tells about what he sees, that Jesus is the one who John has been talking about. He has seen the Holy Spirit come upon him like a dove.

John has been called to witness to this one who he doesn't know, but he has seen him.

John is the paramount witness, saying there he is, look! So John's own followers go to find out.

As a community of faith that is what we are called to do, to witness to what we hear and see. It is not about something especially magical or to even to have the best program or exciting activities.

Our role is actually to see where God is at work in the world, to notice it and point it out and share about what we see just as we would some exciting piece of news.

In a time when many are anxious, when the church seems to have less power or voice it is easy to think that we have to work harder or invest in some magic program.

Yet advice that businesses are given when they hit hard times is to 'stick to the knitting'. In other words to stick to what is our core business.

Well what is our core business? It is God business. What we can speak of is how God is part of our lives, that there is meaning to be found in loving God and loving others.

We can speak of the things of the spirit, of those times when we have seen and experienced God. The life of faith is about our encounter with the mystery of the divine.

Even Albert Einstein said 'the most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and science. Whoever

does not know it and can no longer wonder, no longer marvel is as good as dead. It was the experience of mystery that engendered religion’.

What we are about most of all is knowing God and seeing where God is at work, and experiencing God’s grace in our own lives. That is what we have to share. The focus of all our work, of all that we do here needs to be about what is at the heart of our faith.

As someone once said: The focus of all that we are and all that we do is God. So the first step is to ask ourselves where have we noticed God being at work in our lives.

John the Baptist was able to talk about what he himself had noticed, what he had seen and he shared it. That is what we are to be about, to notice God’s presence, to share it and then invite others to experience it.

Often people discover that God is already there, but they just haven’t seen it. It is often the same for us, that we sometimes don’t notice it until someone else helps us to name it and claim it. Other times it is when we’re asked the right question.

This is what Jesus does when he sees the disciples following him. Jesus asks them what they are looking for? They aren’t really sure yet and stumble around asking about where he’s staying. Usually early on in our journey we’re actually not

sure exactly what we are looking for, or even how to express it, but we know we're looking for something.

Jesus says to them come and see. When we pay attention to Jesus, when we continue to learn about where God is in our lives and how that connects with God's story as we see it in the bible we are more open to notice how God is out and about in the world.

This season of Epiphany is a time to be aware of God's light shining in our lives and to recognize that we are all called to share that light. God has known us since before we were in the womb, God knows us and seeks us now. God calls us just like he did Isaiah, just like Paul and the community of Corinth. We are called to be lights, to notice and to say 'look here is God, here is hope, here is new life, here is God's light.' We are called not just to notice but also to join in where we can.

One of the things that I have been noticing in these weeks following the bushfire crisis is how people are doing what they can to help, to be connected with other people who are going through such difficult times as well as in caring for animals who have survived. There is something deep and moving about the truckloads of hay, the cafes linking up with cafes in bushfire affected communities to support them.

And across the ditch in New Zealand a city still recovering from the earthquake, where the physical scars are still so evident there were people raising money to help. Sometimes

good news and hope begin even in the midst of suffering, as we are with others through it.

These candles –this Christmas candle reminds us that God is with us. God is with us and we are called both to notice but also to be with others in God’s name.

John the Baptist was one who pointed forward, who was able to share what he had seen and say look here he is!

*Augustine summarised this as:  
I listen; he is the one who speaks.  
I am enlightened; he is the light.  
I am the ear; he is the Word.*

*Lectio:  
Isaiah 49.1-7  
Psalm 40.1-14  
1 Cor 1.1-9  
John 1.29-42*