

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

In the book of Genesis in a creation story, God created Adam and “Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone’” and God created Eve. Perhaps it’s because of recent funerals, meeting with grieving families, especially grieving spouses that has brought this to my mind. It’s not good to be alone. Having seen so much grief over the years I believe that being alone can be in itself a cause for grief.

With the millions of words that have been written recently trying to explain what you might call our modern condition, I think being alone is a big part of it that’s often overlooked. It’s overlooked because after all, we are Americans, many of us descended from generations of self-sufficient, solitary (although not too solitary or we wouldn’t be here) pioneers, and perhaps more so than ever, we’re estranged and apart from others. You can say it’s part of our American image, self-made, self-sufficient, conquering whatever needs to be conquered whether main street, wall street, the forest or the prairie. It’s a seductive image that has gathered us in and we in our self-sufficiency have bought into this image and made it our own.

We think we choose how we live, we have our guiding philosophies, we are wise in our own minds, and we know just what products we need to free us from the bondage of society that prevents us from being ourselves, our true selves. Harshness toward others who seem to block our way, perhaps even bullying with those who do not believe as we believe and look like we look, but it’s okay we tell ourselves because our spirituality leads us to believe that it’s every man or woman for him or herself, we exist as we will our existence.

And so in our self-made, self-imposed, self-willed loneliness we find ourselves groping, trying to feel our way in the darkness, darkness we carry with us even as we try to impose our darkness on others.

Now we find ourselves here on this second Sunday of Epiphany, a church season sometimes called the season of light, celebrated because of the wisemen coming to the infant Jesus, Jesus the King, the Savior, uncovered and revealed, illuminated. And in our gospel we find insight speaking to us about our world today.

The Lamb of God is revealed, Son of God, Rabbi, Messiah. This revelation isn’t the result of John the Baptizer’s superior knowledge, intellectual ability or insight, Jesus’ identity is revealed and imparted by “the one who sent me to baptize with water,” who further said to John “He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” John has been and is doing what he was instructed by God to do. He was obedient to his calling, his mission, and so the truth about Jesus was revealed to him, and he gave witness to others about the Son of God.

And in the same way, those who follow Jesus, Andrew and Simon called Cephas or Peter as we know him, along with other disciples enter in to a relationship with Jesus not because they are superior to other men, but because of the testimony of

another, because they are invited by the Word made flesh. Now I've referred to this before how we often try to fit Jesus into a box of our own making, we want our truth to be his truth, and we want him to know we're doing him a favor by giving of our time and ourselves. But if we begin to feel called, pushed, cajoled into doing something we don't really feel comfortable doing, well it's time to pack up and leave.

Now I mentioned we find insight today, the Lamb of God revealed, but right along with that we find insight that Jesus is the source of who we are, he is our identity, it's his will that really counts, not our self-will. You know, sometimes we want to lighten, soften the abrupt call by Jesus of the first disciples. We like to think they much have known each other, had a relationship of some kind. Just thinking a simple "come and see" invitation from Jesus could get Andrew and another, then Simon, and others to simply drop their nets, and follow goes against the grain. So there must be something else at work here, after all we shape our own identities and the idea that identity is given isn't something that's acceptable. But here we have Jesus giving Simon a new name and giving a new identity. Oh, Simon is still Simon, and he is and will be as impetuous as always, but his new name Cephas means rock, he's solid and he will be a foundation upon which Jesus will build. And this is the Word of God at work in the world.

As John our gospel writer's story unfolds, the first disciples discover more and more the truth about Jesus, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, he will accomplish what he purposes, he will live into the Father's will, as the first disciples discover Jesus' reason for being in the world. Because as John writes in his gospel, Jesus gives the power to become children of God. He enters into our worlds and shines his light of truth, the grace of God into the darkness of our self-serving world-view, the graceless living that we daily endure. We realize the truth of Jesus, who is the Truth, the Word made flesh, who is the Chosen of God, Son of God, who is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Know now brothers and sisters that Jesus is not far away and long ago, but here now, today and always, and sets us free from the bondage to sin we have embraced, Jesus addresses us in loneliness, our solitary estrangement and Jesus calls us to himself, Christ crucified, Jesus calls us to one another, to walk in his ways, to receive his good gifts and be made new by his love.

Amen.