**January 18, 2015 – 2nd Sunday after Epiphany**

**© 2015 Jean E. Mornard**

For today’s Gospel, we take a brief side trip into the Gospel of John. Before we get to it, I want to take a brief digression into the logic behind the Revised Common Lectionary. For those of you who know this stuff, bear with me. And if all of you know it, I apologize for boring you and we need never talk about the subject again.

Anyway the RCL follows a three-year cycle – Years A, B, and C, each starting on Advent 1 and ending 25 or so weeks after Pentecost, on the Feast of Christ the King. In Year A, the year we just left, we hear most of the Gospel of Matthew. In Year C, we hear most of the Gospel of Luke. And in Year B, where we are now, we focus on the Gospel of Mark.

However, the Gospel of Mark, being the shortest Gospel, is too short to fill out a whole year, so the RCL committee tucked in various sections of the Gospel of John here and there to fill it out. This is good because, being a three-year cycle, this is the only way we hear much of anything from John, except during Holy Week, where it’s all John all three years.

Okay, end of digression. I wanted to mention it thought, because I think it’s important to know how our church deals with the Bible. Now back to John.

This little vignette is at the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry, when he’s calling his disciples around him. He’s already called Andrew, Peter, and Philip, and Philip is very eager for his friend Nathaniel to meet Jesus.

This story and the one before it about Peter and Andrew are very simple. There isn’t a lot of theological discourse and intellectual discussion involved. Jesus finds his disciples one by one, and simply says, “Follow me.” And after meeting him, they simply do just that.

That’s really what discipleship is, at the bottom line. Following Jesus. But like Nathaniel in this story, it’s really hard to follow Jesus if we don’t know him. Nathaniel kind of cracks me up. Even though the story doesn’t specifically say where he is at this point, I imagine him sitting in the shade of a fig tree and watching the world go by when suddenly his friend Philip rushes up to him all out of breath.

“Nate!” he gasps. “We’ve found him!”

“Slow down Phil, and catch your breath. Who have you found? Did your dog run away again?”

“No, no, we’ve found the one about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote!”

“Okaaaay. I’ll bite. Who is he?”

“He’s Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth!”

“Right. And he came from Nazareth, the armpit of the region. All righty then. Phil, I think you’ve been out in the sun too long.”

At this point Philip grabs Nathaniel’s arm and hauls him to his feet. “Nate, you are the most cynical SOB I’ve ever met. Come and see for yourself.”

And the rest we know. Nathaniel meets Jesus, who doesn’t call him a cynical SOB, but rather an Israelite in whom there is no deceit. And something about how he says it, and how he tells Nathaniel that he saw him under the fig tree before Philip came to get him, convinces Nathaniel. Something about merely meeting Jesus in person causes Nathaniel, the cynical SOB, to know that he is the Son of God.

Something about meeting Jesus and knowing him, makes us want to follow him and be his disciples, too. But how can we really get to know someone we see only one hour a week? We don’t have the advantage that those first disciples had, of knowing Jesus in the flesh. So we have to use other means.

Canon Frank Logue, who is Canon to the Ordinary in the Diocese of Georgia, wrote a piece the other day on discipleship vs. church membership. His opinion is that many churches are not doing enough to help people to become disciples of Jesus, and I agree wholeheartedly with him. Oh sure, there are lots of reasons – even good reasons – why this is so. Everybody’s busy. Clergy are frequently pulled in many directions at once and try to wear many hats. And the world, frankly, often holds more attraction than the Church does.

But the Great Commission says to go out and make disciples of all the nations. And in order to make disciples, we first have to BE disciples. I personally don’t feel like I’m doing nearly enough along those lines, and that’s something I am looking to change this year. And I challenge you all to come with me.

Canon Logue, in his article, offered some places to start. The first thing he says is to read the Bible. Every day, and in such a way as to read the whole thing within a certain period of time. Luckily, we have resources to help us with that. I know from personal experience that if I start from Genesis with the intention of reading it all the way through just doesn’t work, for me at least. I usually get to about Samuel before stalling out.

Our daily office lectionary, which is different from the Revised Common Lectionary, is on a two-year cycle, so if you do morning and evening prayer every day, you will read the Bible all the way through in two years. Or if you don’t want to do the daily office, you can still use the lectionary. Also, *Forward Day by Day*, which we have copies of in the lobby, follows that same lectionary and offers reflections on the readings. I’m ashamed to admit that I don’t read the Bible every day, but that’s something I am changing.

Canon Logue also suggests creating a Rule of Life. This sounds a little foreign and maybe a little daunting, but really all it is, is writing down your spiritual practices, both the ones you currently do and the ones you hope to develop, and then following it every day. I plan on holding a session on creating a Rule of Life in the near future, so I hope people will take advantage of that to at least see what it’s about.

Daily prayer, too, is a way to get to know Jesus and to practice discipleship. I try to have a daily prayer discipline, but even I sometimes resort to drive-by praying, or praying as I’m falling asleep. It seems like there just aren’t enough hours in the day, but really, it’s a matter of priorities. If we make God our priority over the busyness and demands of the world, there’s plenty of time. And if we’re not making God a priority, then why are we even here?

My challenge to us all, myself included, is this: like Nathaniel, to get up from our comfortable fig trees and get to know Jesus. Then we can become true disciples and go out to do the work he has given us to do. Let’s transform Grace Church, and then Huron, and then maybe the world by following Jesus as his disciples.

Amen.