

SERMON- Epiphany 2 (A)

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Isaiah 49:1-7

Corinthians 1:1-9

Psalm 40:1-12

St. Timothy's (Herndon)

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John 1:29-42

OPENING:

According to the Scout Law, a Boy Scout is:

“trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.”

12 adjectives used to describe what a Scout “is”.

According to the Gospel of John, we hear Jesus described as, just in its first chapter: “the Lamb of God, the Son of God, Rabbi/ Teacher, the Messiah/ the Anointed. The Christ. The Word made Flesh. The Son of Man.”

These are cascading, almost dizzying titles for the “God-man”; this person known as “Jesus of Nazareth.”

For the most part, the other Gospels allow those designations to come into play slowly, over the course of Jesus’ life and ministry. We follow along with the disciples and their thick headedness and explore who Jesus is over time.

In his Gospel, John tells us right away, he “frontloads” these understandings, throwing them at you one after another, trying to see if you can keep up.¹

It's almost like those frustrating tests in high school (I feel like it was math class?), where the teacher gives you all the answers to the problem beforehand.

You just have to prove it to be true, connect the answer back to the question.

INDICATIVES

I always liked how the Scout Law says that a Scout **is** those twelve things.

Not “should be” or “is working towards it” or something like that.

“IS.”

Now, having been a rambunctious Scout myself, the Scout Law might seem... a little optimistic in its description.

BUT here is the grammar lesson that I have given before... when talking about a life of faith, and I also think it describes Scouting and its Law:

¹ Matson, Mark A. 2002. *John*. (Interpretation Series) Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox. 15-18.

The description is in the indicative mood for a reason, as it states a fact... a reality. It's not the imperative mood, you should do this, or DO THIS! (exclamation point) And it's not the subjunctive mood, if you were to do this, then this would happen.²

It's stating a fact, a Scout IS _____
Scripture is like that as well.

Now, we don't read it that way. We read it as a series of demands and bargains. We *need* to read Scripture, though, in the indicative, we need to hear God's words, not as self-help (that nagging imperative), or not as a means to an end (which is a form of consumerism, a bargaining around good behavior in exchange for something) but instead as a description of the fundamental reality of the way that the world **is**.

The Gospel of John is helpful on that account, as the Evangelist continually peppers us with these indicative descriptions of who Jesus is. Here are some more to come:

I am the Good Shepherd	I am the Gate
I am the way and the truth and the life.	I am the Vine.
I am the light of the world	I am the bread of life
I am the resurrection.	

That's what the Bible says about Jesus, specifically what John says about Jesus. There is so much there. It's so rich and profound that we should pause and consider them, before we look for advice on behavior or on who we should shun or all the other reasons that people sometimes go to Scripture for.

The joke is that, instead, we read the Bible like we read our high school yearbook when we first get it. We get it and the first thing you do is search for ourselves in it. We flip through its pages to see if that picture turned out okay. But the Bible, at least, is not primarily a story about us. The Bible is story about God, where God is the subject. That's what we should be looking for.³

GOSPEL:

Jesus' first words in John's Gospel are helpful on that account even as they are oh-

² McDavid, William, Ethan Richardson, and David Zahl. 2015. *Law and Gospel: a Theology for Sinners (and Saints)*. 48.

³ Podcast. "Epiphany 2 (A): The Lamb of God for the Trainwrecks of the World" (1/12/2026) *Same old Song*.
<https://thesameoldsong.fireside.fm/408>

so enigmatic. Jesus asks a question:

“What are you looking for?”

We have already heard all testimonies, we heard all the answers coming out of the mouth of the author, John the Evangelist, out of John the Baptist, and out of the disciples.

And Jesus gives us the question:

“What are you looking for?”

What a great question for our own evangelism.

My guess is that if you asked that question, if you knocked on doors all across Herndon, people would answer that question “What are you looking for (in a church)?” by saying something like:

“We are looking for: ‘a caring community, a place where my children can learn something, a Bible Study maybe. A Church that will take a stand. Programs.’”

Those are all good answers, but they are all are just shorthand for... “God.”

People are looking for God.

And if they are not, we should remind them that they should be. Or that, at the very least, that is what we are looking for. And, like a beggar who knows where the crumbs are, we have an inkling on where God can be found.

Now the disciples, they are clever, they answer Jesus’ question with a question.

Jesus asks: “What are you looking for?” and they respond: “Where are you staying?” Jesus says: “Come and see.”

My hope then is that our version of that theoretical conversation would go something like this with our neighbors in Herndon and with one another:

We ask “What are you looking for?”

They answer some version of what I described. We say: “It sounds like you are looking for God.”

They say “Well, where is God saying?”

We say: “God is staying here at St. Timothy’s. God has taken up residency. Like Celine Dion in Las Vegas. He does weekly feasts, he hands out food, he sings songs. COME AND SEE.”

DISCIPLES:

I guess it’s human nature, but we get it backwards.

And the disciples do as well. We all think we are the subject and God is the object.

And so disciples, they even have the gall to say, in our reading, “We found him.”

They make themselves the subjects, and Jesus the object.

Andrew does it here and then Phillip does it again in a moment.⁴

We turn God into a project, we pretend like we found the answer to our problems, through our own good deeds, or our own something.

When, in reality, we received this “Good News”—this Gospel—as Objective Truth. The Good news should read as a News flash: “Jesus is God.” FULL STOP.

If we can believe that, if we can know it to be true, if we know that that IS.

If we know that as the answer, then we will get the questions right. And then from that, all the good works and the church programs will flow.

That gives us the opportunity to spread that news, that process of evangelism, not via bullying, through guilt or fear, or even through an argument where we try to prove this thing that we know to be true.

But rather we live in a way such that we know what the answer IS.

CONCLUSION

I am not talking about the “power of positive thinking” or “believe it until you see it” or something like that. The language of Mindfulness might say: “Visualize what you want to occur going through the goal posts.” And that might be helpful. I am talking about something deeper, an existential reality where Jesus and all his titles.

To stay with the football metaphor but to flip it on its head.

In the words of country singer, Bobby Bare, “Dropkick me, Jesus, through the Goalposts of life.”⁵

In Christianity, we long to be the object of God’s designs, not the other way around. You are not the quarterback, you are not the wide receiver, you are not the coach calling the plays, you are not even the offensive linemen doing the dirty work, you are the football.

You exist solely for God’s glory, to be enjoyed and tossed about.

To get kicked and put down and to weather adversary.

But then to rise in glory and to fall into God’s arms of everlasting love.

AMEN

⁴ John 1.41, 1.45.

⁵ [Dropkick Me, Jesus - Mockingbird](#)

