

**Sunday Next Before Advent Sermon by Bishop Michael Hawkins**

By the Right Reverend Michael W. Hawkins

Bishop of Saskatchewan

What do you seek?

In lyrics which have at least become classic in rock and roll terms, the Irish rock band, U2, gives expression to a human longing and dissatisfaction, which is universal. They sing, “I have climbed the highest mountain, I have run through the fields, I have scaled these city walls, I have spoke with the tongues of angels, I have held the hand of a devil.” And throughout this song, there is the most memorable refrain: “But I still haven’t found what I’m looking for.”

Is there any echo of that sentiment in your heart and life? I still haven’t found what I’m looking for. Who is it, that can satisfy the longings of our hearts? What is it, that can quiet the storm inside?

Listen to what Andrew tells us, with an excitement which neither two thousand years nor translation can obscure: “We have

found the Messiah.” And Philip relates with equal joy, “We have found him.” In this Jesus, they found what they had always and everywhere been looking for. That is what happens, when we truly encounter the Lord Jesus and open ourselves to him. We find what, in so many ways, and some of them dangerous and self-destructive, we have been looking for.

I recall the best Christmas gift we ever bought for our children. It was a pair of Lego Bungee Blaster Racers. As every year, they had given us some suggestions as to what they might enjoy, but this had not been on any list. It was one of the presents they were allowed to open, before I left for church on Christmas morning. And the response to this unexpected gift - this previously unknown Lego machine - was: “I never knew that this was what I always wanted!”

When I met Jesus Christ, when I met him and embraced him by faith, I realized, that I never knew this was what I always wanted.

## **Sunday Next Before Advent Sermon by Bishop Michael Hawkins**

There is a kind of Evangelism 101 in that Gospel reading today, and we should not neglect its basic lessons. How can you and I be Evangelists? First of all, point others to Jesus, like John the Baptist did. John didn't ask people to follow him, but pointed them to Jesus, so that they might follow him.

Secondly, look at Andrew and Philip. They simply relate what they have found. I remember a great and simple testimony from someone who always went to early morning communion. She said, "You just feel so clean and fresh after Communion." Relate to others, in your own words, what you yourself have found in the Lord Jesus.

Thirdly, to whom should we speak? Andrew goes to his brother, and to Philip, his friend and neighbour. So if you point others to Jesus, tell your family and friends, in your own words, what you have found in him. You, too, might bring someone to Jesus. Keep the faith, yes - and share it, too! And that means

sharing in a very personal way, not confronting, but in an open and inviting way, what your faith in Jesus means to you.

Both our readings are full of such witnesses to Jesus - Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Andrew and Philip. By Jeremiah, God promises this King, the son of David, who will bring salvation and judgment. Andrew and Philip rejoice that God has kept and fulfilled that promise in Jesus Christ. John calls him the Lamb of God, that is, the sinless sacrifice who takes away the sin of the world. Remember when Isaac asks his father, Abraham, the awkward question, about what they are going to sacrifice on the mount. Abraham responds in words which are prophetic, "God will provide himself the lamb for an offering, my son." God fulfills this word in coming himself, for he sent no other. He came himself, in our flesh and blood, to offer himself to take away the sin of the world.

So John knows him - the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world - and that is the purpose of this whole service: that we

**Sunday Next Before Advent Sermon by Bishop Michael Hawkins**

might behold the lamb of God. The disciples know him as Rabbi, Master or Teacher. Andrew knows him as the Messiah or Christ. Philip recognizes him as the long-promised one. He knows of his earthly origins, from Nazareth, the son of Joseph, and his origin in the plan of God.

Everyone is speaking about Jesus to you this morning, including me. But our Lord himself speaks just three times. He speaks words which belong not to Peter alone, but to all of us, to you and me. He speaks these words:

What do you seek?

Come and see.

Follow me.

What do you seek? We don't always know what we are seeking, what we are really after. What have we come to Church this morning in search of? Our answers may sound weak and poor.

Well, listen to their pathetic reply in today's Gospel: "Where are you staying?" It sounds like they had no idea what to answer, to the question of what they were seeking. But in their journey with Jesus, in the time spent with him, they will get clarity. He promises, "Seek and ye shall find." And he asks you a personal question today: "What do you seek? What is going on in your heart? What are you after? What are you looking for?"

Come and see. Their answer may not be so bad after all; that is, they might want to know how or where to be with Jesus. Now, this second word from our Lord has a challenge built right in. It would have been much easier, if the Lord had said to them and to us, "See and Come." But what he said and says is, "Come and See."

"Come to me and you will see." That simple invitation took those men on a three-year journey with Jesus that changed them for ever. It is an invitation to come and see, to stay with him, but also an invitation in him and with him, to see what you have been

**Sunday Next Before Advent Sermon by Bishop Michael Hawkins**

seeking. That same invitation, open ended, is extended to each of us by him - “come and see.”

Finally, follow. Follow what? This or that religious trend or party or sect? This Priest or that Preacher? Your favourite Bishop or Primate? Jesus is the only one who can say it, and not be out of his mind. Lots of others say it, and they have their followers, but only Jesus can say truly, “Follow me.” This means something more, something deeper, than “come and see.” Many of us are at the “come and see” stage, checking it all out. But “follow me,” that means do something about it, it means an obedience, to walk in my footsteps, to imitate and learn of me.

Do you see the logical progression in those three things Jesus says in today’s Gospel? First - “What are you looking for?” Well, we don’t exactly know, but there is this yearning deep inside.

Second - “Come and see.” And then as we stay with him, we find

what we've been seeking, and we are asked to commit, with Jesus' third saying, "Follow me."

As plainly as our Lord spoke those words to Andrew and Philip, he speaks them to you and me, and to our hearts today. First he asks you to be honest, at least with yourself but with him as well. What do you seek? Open and unburden your heart to him in prayer, tell him honestly and perhaps awkwardly, what you're looking for. Next, he invites you and me to come and see. We come to see, to behold, to embrace the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And finally he commissions us: Follow me.

U2 has another part to their song, after they admit they still haven't found what they're looking for. Here's what they sing:

I believe in the kingdom come

Then all the colours will bleed into one

Bleed into one

**Sunday Next Before Advent Sermon by Bishop Michael Hawkins**

Well, yes, I'm still running

You broke the bonds

And you loosed the chains

Carried the cross

And my shame

All my shame

You know I believe it!

Alleluia, sing to Jesus! We, too, have found him. **Amen.**