

SUNDAY

by SUNDAY

by Joan Mitchell, CSJ

Open a bible, and place a lighted candle at the center of your group. Provide a loaf of sweet, tasty bread.

LEADER: Our memories nourish our present and future.

ALL: Open our ears to hear God's call today.

LEADER: We seek purpose.

ALL: Open our eyes to see the Spirit's activity in our lives.

LEADER: The Spirit stays and abides with us.

ALL: Open our hearts to live the gospel word we reflect upon.

"Come and see," Jesus says when Andrew wants to learn more about him in Sunday's gospel. "Come and see" is a call to encounter. Come, talk, stay, meet face to face, interact, discover who I am and what our relationship might be. The invitation opens the door to more than a quick look. With our five senses and conscious minds, we humans can probe who someone really is and what life means.

Jesus invites us to stay curious. We humans are embodied spirits. Wonder and awe fuel our spirits. Beauty in nature or art can stir awe-filled moments of breathing deeper and feeling gratitude for being alive.

Creation implies a creator. Evolution toward conscious life gives us the capacity to seek its meaning.

The Old Testament book of Lamentations finds God's love in every dawn. "The steadfast love of the Holy One never ceases; God's mercies never come to an end; they are new each morning. So great is God's faithfulness" (3.22-23).

Our experiences matter, our daily sights, sounds, handshakes, conversations. We can probe what and who gives us life and ask where God is in the events we live. We can also take the world for granted and consider it ours, not God's gift.

What do we hear in the birds singing each morning? Their songs can awaken us to the gift of being alive or simply frustrate our efforts to stay asleep. What attention am I paying to all I see, hear, taste, smell, and feel? Where



Photo: Pan Xunlin/Shutterstock.com

am I finding God in the ups and down of being alive?

Can I find God at the intersection where I live? The traffic starts at five. A symphony of sounds begins—the swish of buses and delivery trucks, the clang of empty side-loaders banging like cymbals on every bump. People are up for the day, interconnecting, using their life energies to do their part in a whole. I want to join in. Here comes the train.

● **What wonders do you experience in creation and your daily interactions with others?**

GOSPEL

Jesus says, "Come and see who I am."



NARRATOR: John the Baptist stood with two of his disciples looking intently at Jesus walking by.

JOHN: See, the lamb of God.

NARRATOR: The two disciples heard what John said and followed Jesus. Noticing that they were following him, Jesus turned around and said to them:

JESUS: What do you seek?

DISCIPLES: Teacher, where do you stay?

JESUS: Come and see.

NARRATOR: They went and saw where he stayed and remained

with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John talk about Jesus and followed him. Afterward, first thing, he found his brother Simon.

ANDREW: We have found the messiah.

NARRATOR: Andrew led Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said:

JESUS: You are Simon, John's son. Your name will be Cephas.

NARRATOR: This name is translated Peter.

John 1:35-42

into seeking him in the plot. Only in the passion narrative does the gospel give the answer to the meaning this title hints from the beginning.

In John's narrative Jesus dies at the same time the lambs for Passover are slain in the temple. This parallel identifies Jesus' giving of his life on the cross with the Passover lambs that saved the Hebrew slaves from the tenth plague—the death of the firstborn, the plague that persuaded Pharaoh to free them.

● **What do you hear about Jesus that makes you want to learn more?**

Seek. In John's gospel Jesus draws people out and into conversation, into questions and misunderstanding, into reflection on the wonders of his presence with them, and ultimately into faith in him. Jesus' conversation with Andrew is typical. Jesus asks, "What are you seeking?"

Come and see. Jesus uses these words to invite Andrew and his friend to get to know him firsthand. He invites the two to experience his conversation and person, to see physically with their eyes what he's like.

The fourth gospel stresses the reality of the incarnation; these disciples that Jesus gathers in chapter one can see God in Jesus. The gospel makes this explicit only after

Jesus calls us to stay with him.

Andrew and an unnamed disciple go and see firsthand where Jesus lives and stay with him for a couple of hours late one afternoon. They leave transformed.

John's gospel calls us today into the same transforming relationship with Jesus that Andrew experienced. In this simple scene Jesus calls us to come, see, and stay with him.

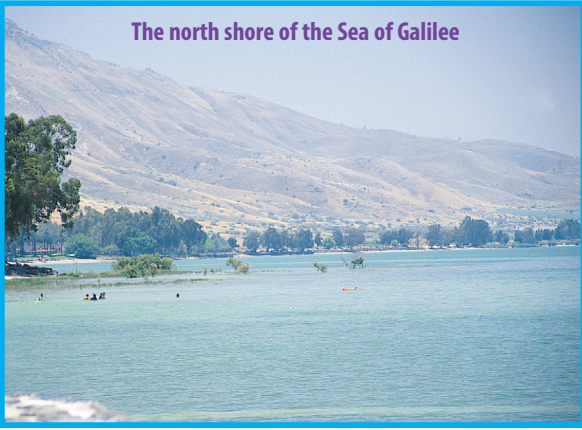
The fourth gospel is a carefully-composed literary work. In Sunday's gospel passage the evangelist uses the simple verbs *hear*, *seek*, *come*, *see*, *stay with*, and *find*. These familiar verbs herald

theological themes that the gospel elaborates over the course of its narrative.

Hear. Andrew searches out Jesus because he hears John the Baptist exclaim as Jesus walks by, "See, the lamb of God." Hearing his teacher identify Jesus in such an intriguing way sets Andrew on a search to learn more about him.

The carefully-crafted gospel lets us hear this title, "Lamb of God," said of Jesus twice in chapter one without telling us what it means. The author draws us into using the written story to find out who Jesus is, just as the Baptist draws Andrew

The north shore of the Sea of Galilee



DO SOMETHING

CHARITY

JUSTICE

- Go and experience firsthand people's needs at a food pantry, ESL class, shelter, or meal program. Identify and investigate justice and advocacy groups that can raise your consciousness of local needs and offer ways to address them.

the last supper when Jesus explains to Philip, "Who sees me has seen the Father."

- **What are you seeking?**
- **What does Jesus show us about who God is?**

Stay with, remain, abide.

The few hours Andrew and his friend stay with Jesus changes their lives. Afterward Andrew immediately tells his brother Peter that he has found the messiah. Encountering the holy in Jesus impels Andrew to mission, to invite others to find out who Jesus is.

Jesus' disciples stay with him as he heals, teaches, and models how to live. They follow him through misunderstanding, bewilderment, footwashing, his death—to the abiding relationship he promises in his farewell address. "I am in the Father and the Father is in me. You are in me, and you are in the Father."

Staying with Jesus on the journey of discipleship leads to abiding in the lasting love and life of God. The Spirit will stay with Jesus' followers as the Spirit remained with him.

Today many first-world missionaries understand their role among two-thirds world peoples as accompaniment. They walk with, stay with, and learn firsthand from people who are poor—from their sufferings and indignities, from their traditions of hospitality and solidarity. Working together to achieve dignity and meet basic needs follows from first getting to know one another across cultures.

Find. Andrew finds his brother to tell him about Jesus,

beginning a chain reaction in the gospel plot. Jesus finds Philip the next day, and Philip finds Nathanael. God lodges among us, according to John's gospel. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." We can find God and help others find God.

- **What Christian practice have you stayed with in your life, for example, rosary, meditation, daily Mass, adoration, retreats, bible study, spiritual reading, a service or advocacy group? How have you grown through this practice?**

Fertile fields along the Sea of Galilee



God calls a child.

Samuel is the child his mother Hannah wept and prayed for and then returned to the Lord as she promised (1 Samuel 1-2). Sunday's first reading tells us what happened next. The boy serves in the temple at Shiloh with an old priest named Eli. Under Eli's leadership visions have become rare in the land; he can't see.

The child Samuel wakes Eli up three times before the old priest catches on that it is God who is calling Samuel. This call story marks a transition. The religion of holy places such as Shiloh, where Eli is the priest, is passing away. Eli doesn't hear God's voice anymore; a new generation does.

In Samuel, Israel's greatest judge arises among the tribes. He comes to know the Holy One and learns to listen to God's voice. God lets none of Samuel's words fall on the ground.

Through this boy God begins to do something new in Israel's history. Samuel anoints Israel's first two kings—Saul and David. Israel moves from a confederacy of tribes to a nation.

The Call of Samuel

NARRATOR: Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Holy One where the ark of God was. The Holy One called to Samuel.

GOD: Samuel, Samuel.

NARRATOR: Samuel ran to Eli, the old priest of the temple.

SAMUEL: Here I am; you called me.

ELI: I did not call you; go back to sleep.

NARRATOR: So Samuel went back to sleep. Again God called him.

GOD: Samuel, Samuel.

NARRATOR: Samuel got up and went to Eli.

SAMUEL: Here I am; you called me.

ELI: I did not call you, my son. Go back to sleep.

NARRATOR: Now Samuel did not yet know the Holy One and God's word had not yet been revealed to him. The Holy One called Samuel a third time. Again, he got up and went to Eli.

SAMUEL: Here I am; you called me.

NARRATOR: Eli recognized that God was calling the child.

ELI: Go to sleep, Samuel, and if you are called, say, "Speak, Holy One, for your servant is listening."

NARRATOR: When Samuel went to sleep in his place, God came and stood as before.

GOD: Samuel, Samuel!

SAMUEL: Speak, for your servant is listening.

NARRATOR: As Samuel grew up, God was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.

1 Samuel 3.3-10,19

- What young people do you see renewing our church or society?
- When have you heard God call your name? What did God have in mind? How did you test the call?
- How are the young people in your family renewing you?

PRAY

Sing the refrain of "Taste and See" (Psalm 34).

*Taste and see, taste and see
the goodness of the Lord.
O, taste and see, taste and
see
the goodness of the Lord,
of the Lord.*

LEADER: We have come and stayed with Jesus in his word.

ALL: The Spirit dwells among us and in us.

LEADER: Let us pass this sweet tasting bread around our group. Break off a piece when it comes to you. Give it to the person next to you with a few words about how their faith has nourished you.

Sing the "Taste and See" refrain. Exchange a sign of peace.



Joan Mitchell, CSJ, the editor of SUNDAY BY SUNDAY, holds a Masters of Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School and a Ph.D. in New Testament from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN.