

SERMON - THE 1ST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY - 10 JANUARY 2010
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

Luke 2:45 (ESV)

and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him.

How often do we journey along in life without knowing if Jesus is with us. How often do we wander off in this direction or that direction not knowing if that is really God's will in our lives... or maybe it is just our own self-direction.

Do we really know where to find Jesus? Would we recognize Him when we found Him? Or, even more important, would he recognize us?

We are now in the season of Epiphany, the time of looking at the manifestation of Jesus, particularly the manifestation of Jesus in our own lives.

The two questions today are, how does Jesus manifest himself in our lives? How do we manifest Jesus to others?

Let us look at the first question, "How does Jesus manifest himself in our lives?"

Where do we find Jesus in our lives? Is He living in us or are we still like Joseph and Mary searching for Him? Is He still standing at the door, knocking? Or have we let him move in? Or do we just invite Him in occasionally for a visit?

Saint Augustine wrote, *Too late have I loved you, O Beauty of ancient days, yet ever new! Too late I loved you! And behold, you were within, and I abroad, and there I searched for you; I was deformed, plunging amid those fair forms, which you had made. You were with me, but I was not with you. Things held me far from you—things which, if they were not in you, were not at all. You called, and shouted, and burst my deafness. You flashed*

and shone, and scattered my blindness. You breathed odors and I drew in breath—and I pant for you. I tasted, and I hunger and thirst. You touched me, and I burned for your peace” (St. Augustine, Confessions).

How often we are as St. Augustine said, *you were within, and I abroad, and there I searched for you; And, You were with me, but I was not with you.*

The Holy Spirit was implanted in us at our confirmation. Yet, we look for God out there, somewhere. In our blindness, we seek for God in all the wrong places.

Saint Patrick wrote

*Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.*

We have to approach God through Jesus. We have to know Jesus in order to know God. To know Christ is the answer to where do we look for God; to accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

But that is just the beginning, we then have to let Jesus literally take up residence in us, to be our guide, our mentor in life, the captain of the ship of our life; to be totally manifested in our souls and bodies.

Then, we have to look at how we manifest God to others.

To quote Saint Francis, again for the umpteenth time, “Go and preach the Gospel. Use

words if necessary.”

It is by our actions that God is manifested to others. It is by our lives, how we live our lives, that we manifest God to others.

We are all witnesses for God. We may be good witnesses or we may be bad witnesses but we are all witnesses. There is no getting around that fact.

It is in how we express the love of God that is the most important. We don't have to be a great theologian, or even articulate. But we have to have the ability to express God's love in the way we live and relate to other people.

There is an expression that charity begins at home. That is true in the sense that we have to know the love of God in our own lives before we can share that love with others.

God has to be manifested in our own lives before we can manifest Him to the world.

We here at St. John's have an awesome task, first to really have Christ manifested in our church family, our church community; then secondly to, as a Christian community, to manifest Christ to the community of Greensboro, to the community of Guilford County, through our love for each other and how we express that love in ministering to those who live in our greater communities.

During this season of Epiphany, it is a good time to reflect on how we are accomplishing that task, how we are coming along with our primary job in life to journey with Jesus and to bring others to know the love of God that passes all understanding.

Let us bow our heads in prayer.

Father in Heaven,

Form us in the likeness of your Son
And deepen his life within us.
Send us as witnesses of gospel joy
Into a world of fragile peace and broken promises.
Touch all hearts with your love
So we may, in turn, love each other.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.