

²⁹The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" ³⁰This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' ³¹I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." ³²And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him." ³³I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." ³⁵The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!"

³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" ³⁹He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). ⁴²He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

I remember my first visit to Theresa. She lived across the street, a few houses down the block from the parsonage I lived in. I was new at being a pastor, making one of my first visits. I entered her three room house, kitchen, living room with the dining table pushed against one wall, a door opening to the bedroom.

Theresa was in her upper eighties, thin, frail. But she did not need much encouragement to talk.

She told me of hard years, of her husband, his death, and of an earlier illness. "I went into the church," she said, "and I prayed. I kneeled down on the steps in front of the altar and prayed. Suddenly Jesus appeared, all bright and light. He said to me, 'Fear not, all will be well.' My husband did get well, he recovered."

As I listened to her tell me this, quite frankly I was skeptical - imagination, wishful thinking, but not Jesus.

But Theresa had more to tell me. She told me of my predecessor, how he had visited her, threatened her by telling her she would go to hell if she used the bathroom in the church.

This woman is bizarre I told myself. I gave her stories no further thought.

A couple of years later I was visiting with the former president of that congregation. He, too, told a story.

He and the pastor had gone to meet with Theresa. She had been telling people what she had told me of the bathroom and the threat of damnation. The council president and the pastor were visiting her to demand that she stop this lie.

It was two against one, but she would not give in, looking straight at the pastor she made her accusation. And he told the truth. Her words were not a lie, but the truth. The pastor had overseen the building of a new church. He didn't want people tracking in mud and snow in the middle of the winter. He knew the elderly Theresa had no indoor plumbing, only an outhouse out back. He made his threat to keep this eighty year old from tracking into the church.

In that moment as the former council president told his story I knew Theresa may well have seen Jesus.

Since that day, in many other living rooms, I have heard others speak of visions, and dreams, and signs. Though I do not know why God would choose some and not others for these gifts, I no longer doubt what they tell.

Our gospel for today tells of one who was granted a vision, a word from God. John the baptizer said, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God."

John could speak boldly about Jesus, for like Theresa he had seen firsthand.

"The next day John was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this and they followed Jesus."

These disciples had no vision, saw no dove, yet they believed. They heard the testimony of John and they believed. They were like most of us.

Faith has been born in our hearts because of the testimony of others. We have heard of how God helped them and we have believed. We have listened to them telling us of the power of prayer and we have believed. We have seen in them a hope and a peace and a love for God that we want for ourselves and we have believed. We are thankful for their witness.

One of the two disciples who heard John was Andrew. The first thing he did was to go find his brother, Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah." He brought Simon to Jesus who looked at Simon and said, "You are Simon, son of John. You are to be called Cephas(which translated means Peter)."

Andrew brought Peter to Jesus. Before he had seen miracles, before he had a vision, before he had seen the power and the glory of the only Son of God, he brought his brother to Jesus.

One day Peter would be the great preacher in the church. When the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost Peter would preach the sermon that would lead two thousand to faith. Peter would heal the sick and raise the dead.

Yes, Andrew brought Peter to Jesus. Andrew heard the testimony of John the Baptist. He believed. He passed on the message he was given. He brought Peter to Jesus.

God used Andrew. God can use you. Like him you can speak what you have heard, you can tell of Jesus who is our Savior and Lord. You can tell others that nothing can separate them from the love of God in Jesus. You can tell the troubled and the weary that in Jesus they will find the strength and the peace they seek.

And God will do the rest. You tell what you have heard and God will do the rest. It is not up to you to be the proof of God's power. You do not need visions to be a witness. You do not even need to testify, "This is what God did for me." Just tell what you have heard, as Andrew told, and God will do the rest.

I've wondered why I have not been given the visions or the dreams. Why haven't I been given the warm glow in my heart that some speak of? Why haven't I had a miracle for myself?

I don't know why. Maybe God simply wanted to touch Theresa in a different way than he has touched my life.

But you and I and everyone who believes are given words to speak. To family and friend, to coworker and enemy God sends us with the word of Jesus. Maybe God intends to touch another Simon through you.

Tell of Jesus.