

*He said unto them, Come and see...*

St. John 1:39

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As we all know, we live in an increasingly disposable society. Almost everything we buy is made to be thrown away.

Once upon a time, back in the day, as we like to say, when something broke, or just failed to work well, or began to look a bit dingy, we'd sit down and give it a good cleaning; or take it to a repair shop where someone would have a look at all of its inner parts, and get everything back in order, so that it might be used and enjoyed for years to come.

But sadly, that's not how things work today. It seems that it never pays to have something repaired. Perhaps the cost of labour is just too great; or the parts are too expensive. It seems that it's a lot easier and cheaper to just throw it away and buy something new.

But, in some cases, it has nothing at all to do with the cost; sometimes it's just about the time and energy it takes to fix something; to clean it up; and to make it look new again.

After all, why go to all that trouble cleaning up and stripping off layer after layer of paint from that old chair, for example, when a replacement is just a few clicks of your mouse away.

This Sunday has long been called Stir Up Sunday.

It takes its name from the first words of this morning's lovely collect:

Stir up we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people...

It hints at what might be a challenge for all of us as we prepare to embark on the Season of Advent next week.

That after nearly six months of the Season of Trinity we may have grown just a little bit bored; a bit unfocused; a bit distracted.

That week after week of daily life may have added one layer after another of disinterest and distraction to our spiritual life, like many layers of paint on that old chair; which now bears little resemblance to how it looked when we first got it.

But, of course, Stir Up Sunday is not primarily concerned with what our furniture looks like.

It's primarily concerned with what our souls look like.

So Stir Up Sunday is a time to look for the joy and excitement and beauty that our souls once had; that perhaps we had forgotten were once there.

Stir Up Sunday is a day to commit ourselves to the essential work, the hard, challenging, rewarding work, of stripping off the layers of distraction and disinterest that life has accumulated around our souls.

That's why we see such a note of excitement and joy in this week's readings: the prophet Jeremiah speaks hopefully of a great day sometime in the future; a day

when God would act to rescue his people from their exile; a day when God would raise up a righteous branch, a descendant from the family of King David; a day when God himself would somehow enter into all their misery and fear and lead them back home.

And we see that same excitement echoed in this week's Gospel; by both Andrew and Phillip when they meet Jesus; the excitement that drives them to run off immediately to share the good news that they've been waiting all their lives to hear: Andrew running to tell his brother Simon; and Phillip running to find his friend Nathaniel; knowing that the day that had been promised long before had finally come.

Imagine, if you can, those horrific stories that we sometimes see on the news; terrible stories of a child lost; searched for diligently, desperately, frantically, by parents and neighbours alike; by people from all over the community and surrounding area; day and night; night and day; looking into every corner and crevice; hoping; praying; scarcely breathing; until, by grace, the first barely believable reports are cried out; we've found him; we've found her, and she's OK.

That's the kind of excitement at the heart of this week's readings:

Andrew's "We've found the Messiah!"

And Philip's "We've found him!"

The excitement that comes from finding the one thing that we most desire; the one thing that we most hope for; the one thing that we most need.

None of that, sadly, will be found at any of the Black Friday sales, regardless of what the flyers that are arriving in our mailbox would tell us.

All that they offer us is something that will amuse us for a moment or two but will eventually be thrown away and replaced.

By nothing more than a few clicks of a mouse.

What Stir Up Sunday offers us is something eternal.

But to have that, to be given that eternal gift, we have to be willing to sit down, to slow down, to look at all those things that have accumulated in our souls, like resentment and selfishness and greed, and to start the hard, challenging, liberating work of restoration.

If we are willing to do the everyday work of generosity, thoughtfulness, forgiveness, and prayer; the daily work of listening to Christ and hearing his call; the liberating work of self-giving, sacrifice, and commitment; if we're willing to scrape off the labours of inattention and apathy that have built up around our hearts, then we will see the Christ.

Just as surely as Andrew did.

Just as surely as Phillip did.

But only if we're willing to sit down and slow down and focus on the hard, challenging, liberating work of restoration.

Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people...

*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord.*