

**“Attraction”**

**(John 1.29-42)**

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**Attraction**

Back in 2019 Kathryn and I decided that come retirement we’d make the big shift to Victoria to be closer to our one-and-only child, Hannah. We didn’t know where we’d live... except that it needed to be within 90 minutes’ drive of Melbourne. So, we came over to look around...

We didn’t really consider Ballarat – our eyes were elsewhere – but out of proper diligence we dropped-in as part of the search. We visited mid-January... arriving on a typical Ballarat summer day – 12 degrees with a bitter wind and misting rain. And yet within an hour or two we looked at each other and said, “*You know, this place might work well for us!*”

We both felt it. Some deep intuitive attraction... a whisper saying, ‘*Explore here! Something good is waiting for you here!*’ (And so it’s proved to be!)

*Attraction* – it’s a fascinating phenomenon.

**What Are You Looking For?**

Today’s Gospel opens with John the Baptist proclaiming Jesus as the *Lamb of God*... confirming what he saw at Jesus’ baptism.<sup>1</sup>

And then follows this intriguing first interaction between Jesus and two of John’s disciples. Andrew and one other – (un-named) – follow Jesus down the road... walking some distance behind... If it was a ‘police drama’ we might say *they were tailing Jesus*. Jesus becomes aware of them... turns and challenges them, “*What are you looking for?*”

They don’t answer his actual question, but instead fudge their response with “*Rabbi, where are you staying?*” They are unwilling... or is it unable... to tell him *what they’re looking for*. I assume

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<sup>1</sup> The Spirit descending on Jesus like a dove...

it's the latter – they can't answer because they don't know... They've simply obeyed some inner impulse and walked after him. Something *is* stirring within them, but they're not sure what that that urge or attraction is – they can't articulate it yet. (Perhaps a more honest response might have been... 'We don't know rabbi, but can we hang around you for a bit until we do?')

### **What Are WE Looking For?**

They follow... out of an attraction they are yet to understand...

Attraction is an interesting phenomenon... and it's been at heart of the Epiphany Story these last 3 weeks.

- Something draws/attracts the Mystics (Wise men) from the East, to go on a great journey... following a flickering light in the heavens. They must have been looking for ... hungry for... *something*.
- In last week's gospel, *something* draws Jesus to John for baptism... though neither of them seems absolutely sure *why*.
- And again today, *something* attracts these two disciples of John the Baptist, to *trail* Jesus, even though they don't know what it is.

And what about us?

What are **WE** looking for?

Yes, in the BIG context of LIFE... but also *here*, in this place... this church... this act of worship.

I doubt if many of **us** could articulate it... quickly anyway. For 'church' becomes so habitual, most of us rarely stop to ask *why* or *what*.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, it is THE question for today. Christ Jesus looks directly at **us**, "And you? *What are you looking for? Why are you hanging around here?*

### **Exploration**

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<sup>2</sup> When people stop attending, they can often articulate an absence... 'There's nothing there for me anymore.' Perhaps discerning the negative or the absence is easier.

It would be good... healthy for your soul... to take an 'hour' this week... sit somewhere quiet... and ask that question... listening for what may emerge from your heart. Certainly, ask the BIG question about LIFE... but also honour the context in which the divine voice is heard today... *'In this business of church and faith... what am I looking for?'*

It's not the answer that matters so much – but it's the question... and the intention to engage with it in adult responsibility. There's no *right* answer... no *required* answer... no *perfect* answer. But trying to hear/feel/discern the attraction... trying to name what it is, even if we're not sure... can be a valuable stepping stone in maturing adult faith.

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Look, we've got 2 minutes... let's make a quick start now. (I'll prattle along in the background here... meanwhile you listen to what your heart is asking you to hear.) *What are you looking for?*

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Many of us will have begun in church and faith as children. Do you remember what first attracted you as a child? Lots of people *'did church'* back then... but only a small few have stayed. We have – what's that about?

As a child, I loved all sorts of things about church... but for me the precious jewel was that vision of life lived and spoken by Jesus in what we call The Gospel... so beautiful... and so different from the frightened, shut-down and dishonest culture I came from.

Can you remember?

Over life, the articulation of what we're looking for... hoping for... *will* change. It's part of our maturing in faith. As years passed, I found the Church as an institution *heart-breaking*... but I could never leave, because of that jewel of the Gospel – the beauty of this story of GOD and LOVE that we carry. That's the deep attraction for me – much of the rest could pass and I wouldn't mind overly... but this heart of Christ's vision, I can never turn away from.

What's it like for you?

And now? For me, almost 7 decades on, that same attraction calls me deeper... further. I hear that whisper of divine Spirit saying... *"Follow this! Explore deeper here! There's more waiting for you! Much more!"*

What's it like for you?

(But that's our 2 minutes up... Time to end the sermon!)

### **Conclusion**

In today's gospel, Andrew and his companion, can't answer Jesus's question. They don't know what they're looking for.

But they *are* looking for *something*... and they have the courage, and the trust, to follow whatever that initial intuitive attraction is... and they follow Jesus to where he lives.

They follow... they sit down in his presence "*for the rest of the day*"... and (in Andrew's case at least) for the rest of his life.

Wherever *you* are in your journey of faith, can you find/feel what it is that attracts you... draws you? If you can, even if it's just a whisper... follow it... and see where it leads.

Because Christ Jesus stands before us beckoning... "*Come and see!*"

*"Come and see!"*