

JANUARY 4, 2025 DEACON ROBERT KINGHORN

Well, today the readings are all about ministry, aren't they? Your ministry and my ministry. You know, it's been about 20 years I've been on the streets in ministry in the city of Toronto here. And, you know, I still wonder if I'm doing it right. It doesn't matter when I'm giving a talk, someone's going to put their hand up and say, "How long do you talk to someone before you mention Jesus?" Because you've got to bring them to Jesus, don't we? Of course. So my answer usually is, "You know, if I listen carefully enough I'll realize this is Jesus right there at this moment." So, today, we think about ministry. I think one of the best sayings about ministry I've heard was many years ago. They say through ministry we make a friend, we be a friend, and we bring the friend to Christ. Although often we want to jump to that last part and bring him to Christ without putting the difficult work in of being a friend.

Well, today Jesus is a model of ministry as we heard. We have that beautiful question, "What are you looking for?" What a beautiful pastoral question that is, isn't it? What are you looking for in life? He doesn't immediately start talking about Scripture and theology. He wanted to know where their heart is. And this is what ministry is about - listening so we can hear where people's hearts are, and then we know how to respond. The other thing Jesus did, he always met people halfway. He was going ahead instead of following him, but he turned and accepted them and said, "Let's go together. What are you looking for?" And then, he walked with them. He walked with them and he sat with them. He said, "Let's have a chat about this." That's what ministry is, about listening. Listening to one another.

I heard a story about I think a man in Australia who was ministering to people in the street. And he'd been with this one person for quite a few years in fact, kept meeting and meeting. And the person eventually was dying. And when the man was saying goodbye the person turned to him and said something that was a bit strange. He said, "You always wanted to change me but you never met me." Isn't that sad? You know, we want to change people so often but we have to meet them first, listen to their concerns, listen to their cares. And that's what Jesus did. He said, "Come on, let's talk about it. Let me listen to you and then I will know better how to respond to you." It said today after Andrew met Jesus he immediately became an Evangelist. He went out and said, "Where's my brother Peter? I've got to tell him about this man. I've got to tell him about it."

So this is what we hear at the end of the Eucharist so often. We are sent out as evangelists, sent out into the world. Saying, "Go in peace glorifying the Lord by your life." That is you are an evangelist. You are the one that is looking for people and bringing them to Christ. You look for your call in the world to be that Evangelist. I remember hearing a man being interviewed in television, I think he worked with street kids as well. But someone said to him, "Did you feel called to this work?" He said, "No, well, it depends what you mean by 'call'. I was out there on the street and I saw the need. And the need was my call. So in many ways, yes, you could say I was called to this ministry," he said. But you see, we are all called to this. Again, this is what we hear when we're sent out into the world. We're all called because you are the place where God happens. Yeah. When you're there. Wherever you are in the world, you are the place where God happens through you. You, in many ways, are the real presence of God to this person in front of you.

This was the message of Jesus. We listen. We listen to their cares and concerns as God listens to our cares and concerns in the world. Listens to them and respond in whatever way we can to the person who's with us. To be God with them at that moment. This is the ministry of Jesus to all of us, is what a beautiful, beautiful person we have. Someone that cares for us so much that will always be with us, no matter what time or place it is in life. So I think today the question that Jesus asked to the disciples, "What are you looking for?" I think this is a question we have been asked today. What are we looking for in life? What are we looking for in ministry? So when we are sent out at the end of this Eucharist, go in peace glorifying the Lord by your life, we will go out and we will follow Jesus in His ministry. We will listen to people not always do things for people. Sometimes it's doing things. But the first thing in ministry is to listen and to be that peace of Christ to everyone you meet. Just as Christ is the peace to us at this Eucharist we can be that peace to others in ministry.