

Reflection for the Second Sunday after Epiphany – Year A, January 18, 2026

by Jennifer Irving

There must have been a lot of excitement around the Jordan after Jesus was baptized. What with John declaring at the top of his lungs every time Jesus walked near “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! And many other exaltations that had everyone looking toward Jesus with amazement and wonder whispering behind their hands “Do you think he is really the Son of God?” “He doesn’t look all that.” “Did you see the Spirit descend?” “Do you see the Spirit now?”

Apparently a couple of John’s disciples thought they would try to get a closer look. Maybe they thought if they followed him they would catch a glimpse of the spirit whispering in his ear. Or catch him performing some amazing Messianic feat that would prove he was “the Lamb of God” just like John said. Maybe they secretly hoped Jesus would catch them following him and they would get a chance to talk to him. If that was the case they were in luck because catch them Jesus did. And talked to them too. That whole day apparently. Inviting them to “Come and see” where he was staying. Obviously convincing them in word, in manner, in deed that he was the Messiah. For that is what Andrew was exclaiming when he found his brother: “Simon, Simon, we have found the Messiah! We have found the Anointed one!”

The passage we read this morning doesn’t tell us what Simon felt in that moment but I know what I would have felt: panic. Yep, I would have panicked. Knowing that I should think of something to do, something to say, something (anything!) to convince Jesus that he should let me follow him. That he should let me be his disciple. Something that would stand out from the other people crowding around him, trying to impress and amaze. Something that would prove to Jesus that I would be the best disciple he could ever hope to have. Something that would show him I was uniquely qualified to follow him.

And hence the panic. For what exactly would that something be? How could Simon prove his worthiness to the Messiah, the Son of God?

What tips would we give to young Simon upon his application to follow Jesus?

Well first off, he should get an education. Everybody knows that you have to have an education to get anywhere in the world. Plus, it would look really good on his resume. Proof that he had taken courses about preaching and healing would be good considering all he knew how to do was fish and steer a boat. Too bad there wasn’t really time for a hasty application to the University of Galilee. Jesus was there, now.

Well maybe he should go for the “Canada’s Got Talent” approach. Just show off what he can do well and with just the right attitude—the “it” factor so to speak—that would make Jesus take a second look—that would earn him a golden buzzer to the live shows.

Or maybe a little video audition like the applicants for “Survivor” make. With Andrew’s help he could think up some crazy angle—that would show his impressive strength and dedication to the cause. That would show he was a “survivor”. That he should be one of the twelve chosen to be Jesus’ disciples. He’d need something to prove himself. That’s just the way it works. Everybody knows that.

We all do it, at some time or another in our lives. Try to prove ourselves worthy of respect, worthy of acceptance, worthy of love. And we are expected to prove ourselves. That’s kind of how it works in our world isn’t it?

This past weekend, on Friday night, Neelah was part of a hiring team to find a new minister for those in the First Third of life in our tri-region of Western Ontario Waterways, Horseshoe Falls, and Antler-River Watershed. And you can't tell me that those people they interviewed weren't doing everything in their power to prove that they were the right person for the job. Sitting across from a hiring team of four people answering questions about what they would do if hired, what made them qualified, how they were special. Trying hard to give that hiring team the answers they were looking for.

Or how about kids right now at the end of the first semester at high school with culminating projects, final essays and exams—all trying to prove that they have learned what they need to know in each of their classes. Some trying to get marks that will prove they deserve to get into university or earn a scholarship.

And I don't think we get past it just because we get older and wiser and don't need to go to job interviews anymore. It is so hard not to link our self-worth to what we can do by ourselves and to think we are somehow less worthy if we can't do things we once did whether it is because we are in the hospital, or grieving, or aging and our knees give out or our eyesight fails.

That's just the nature of our world. We don't even think about it. Everybody is expected to prove their worth. And our worth is often directly connected to what we can "do".

So why should it be any different when Andrew brings Simon to Jesus? Of course he'll have to prove himself worthy to be called Jesus disciple. Except he doesn't. He just stands before Jesus. Jesus simply looks at him and then says. "You are Simon, son of John. You are to be called Cephas." Just like that that, Simon has a new name. Just like that Simon is accepted by Jesus as someone worthy of a special name and a special place at his side. He didn't even have a chance to show Jesus his resume or impress him with a song. He didn't have to prove a thing.

There was no "You will be called Cephas as long as you follow me faithfully all the days of your life and listen to and understand all that I tell you." That was a good thing considering how many times Simon called Peter would have no clue what Jesus was talking about. Jesus accepted him just the way he was. A fisherman from Galilee who didn't know much about the world and didn't have a clue about what it meant to be the "lamb of God". Who didn't have a clue that he would be following Jesus to a cross. That there would be more sorrow there that he would ever prove he could handle and more joy than he could ever prove he deserved.

He didn't have to prove anything—for Jesus loved him just as he was. And that is the amazing good news that we all share in. We don't have to prove anything. Jesus loves us just as we are. Jesus calls us just the way we are. Jesus invites us just as we are to "come and see". Come and see the gifts God is ready to give us.

Paul talks about these gifts that even the Corinthians received—that community that was tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt, fightings and fears. Even they knew the grace of God that was given in Christ Jesus. Even they were enriched in speech and knowledge of every kind and were not lacking in any spiritual gift. God is faithful. That is what Paul tells the Corinthians. They don't have to prove themselves worthy of love and grace over and over again. God is faithful. We don't have to prove ourselves worthy of love and grace. God has called us into the fellowship of Jesus Christ our Lord. Just as we are.

Jesus calls us just as we are. Giving us God's gift of love, no questions asked. And it is in that love that we can find the courage to say something—and the power to do anything and the grace to follow the call together. Amen.