

3rd Sun. OT

+ When I was a kid, and I'm sure you've all had this experience, if I learned how to tie my own shoes or ride my back with no hands, I would get my mom or dad and say watch this. And I would proceed to show them what I could do. And if I thought they weren't really paying attention, if they were distracted...I would say, you're not watching. We have a real desire to be seen. Yes, the new ability or impressive feat is part of what we want to show, but it's the fact that *I am doing it that craves sincere attention. And that never really goes away.*

It's why I can't help but appreciate two short and simple words from today's Gospel, and they're said not once, but twice. At first glance, it seems Matthew has provided us with a throughway detail, an inconsequential tid bit. But if you don't rush over the words, if you stop to realize their true significance, the passage takes on a much deeper meaning...so much more is said than what first appeared to be the case. So what are these words?

"As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee," and here it is... "*he saw... two brothers, Simon and his brother Andrew.*" Our focus naturally jumps straight to what Jesus says to them, but so much is said first by those two words, *he saw*. It happens again when Jesus moves on and heads in the direction of James and John. As he gets close Matthew says, he saw two other brothers. Even if Jesus seeing these men was a coincidence, a brief encounter amongst the infinite moments of time, it would hold meaning. We line up and crowd around to get the smallest of attention from those we admire. Athletes after games...movie stars when they go out in public...we're not expecting or hoping to establish some great friendship, no, we're more than content if they briefly acknowledge us, the shortest of encounters.

If that had been Peter and Andrew's experience, a brief and passing encounter with our Lord, even that would have been satisfying. But Jesus was after so much more. First of all, as

Jesus is walking along the Sea of Galilee, it is not a random or unintentional walk...he who knows and sees all is going deliberately to where he knows these men to be. And when he gets there, Jesus seeing them is not a mere means for achieving another purpose. I see the road when I'm driving, and I even focus when the roads are in poor conditions so that I can safely arrive at my destination. This is not how or why Jesus sees the would-be apostles. It's like the parent who gladly sees their child when they desire to be seen.

In the original translation, the form of the Greek verb used for saw implies a prolonged and not momentary seeing. He didn't just happen to lay hold of these men, he didn't see them because they just happened to fall in his line of sight. He deliberately sought them out and looked at them with intention, saw them with a lasting, captivated, interest. And he sees you in the same way. He sees us with an active interest, not primarily in what we're doing, but us for our own sake. Jesus seeing them and then beckoning them harkens back to Genesis where we get the account of God creating the world. God saw the world and then declared it good.

He declares the same thing about you by his act of seeing you. Jesus sees you and me, and he wants us to be fully aware of this so that we can enjoy his attention. And we can, because he watches us not like a security camera where one might be self-conscious for fear of getting caught, he watches like a loving parent who takes delight in really seeing their child. We don't have to put on a fake smile or fix our image as one feels compelled to do when one prepares to be seen on social media.

Mankind has been doing this since the fall of Adam and Eve, symbolized by them recognizing that they were naked. Ever since, we've been trying to cover up our blemishes, hide our defects, control the way we are seen. We try to control the way we are seen because we know we're not perfect, that we are guilty of sin. But so many times, what led us to sin in the

first place, or at least away from the good, was our anxiety and obsession with being seen, controlling or manipulating how we are perceived by others. We've been worrying about being seen by the wrong people or mistaken about what light we should be seen in.

We no longer have to compete for that way of being seen. The look of Jesus is not only affirming, it's fulfilling and captivating. And to return that sight with our own look of seeing Jesus...to see him see you...that's to live life in a mutual gaze with God. The more or the longer we live in and from that experience, that's not just life free from sin...that's truly the good life recreated by Christ and offered to us.