**Epiphany 2 Finding & being found**
We heard just now a story from St. John's gospel about Jesus choosing his disciples. He had been baptised by John the Baptist in the river Jordan. One man who was there was Andrew. He heard John the Baptist talking about Jesus and recognised that Jesus was indeed the longed-for Messiah. That news was staggering.
He immediately went to look for his brother Peter in the crowd. "You must come quickly; we've found the Messiah!"
Peter is a bit shaken, the more so because when they meet, Jesus seems to know all about him. "So, you are Simon," he says:.
"I'm going to call you Peter, because you are going to be my strong rock."

Now while this is going on, along comes Andrew's friend, Philip.  He too has heard that the Messiah is around, so he joins Andrew and Peter. Notice how they are attracted to Jesus. It's like making a snowball. As you roll it along, it attracts more snow. So the finding of the disciples begins to roll. Jesus says, "Let's go back home to the lakeside."
When they get there, Philip finds his friend, Nathaniel.
"We've found the Messiah!" he says.

Nathaniel can't take it in. "Go on with you! You're saying that he comes from Nazareth! I can't believe anything good comes from that village. But I'll come with you."
They come to Jesus who greets Nathaniel like a long lost brother. "But why?" asks Nathaniel. "How do you know me?"

Jesus says to him, "I've known you for a long time, long before you sat under that fig tree. You are a true Israelite and there's nothing false about you. And I have found you at last!"

Now you notice that some people find our Lord and make a deliberate choice, like Philip and Andrew. Others are found by Jesus when He makes himself known to them in unusual or strange ways. Like Peter and Nathaniel.
Many find Him after looking for Him. There are others who are not interested or not looking - but are found by Him.
That is the way of faith. I have seen the truth of that in parish life.

In the 1950s when I was at Windsor, the authorities moved many people bombed out from east London into a small village, Eton Wick, just below the castle. The old villagers were resentful. My work in St George’s Chapel gave me some free time, so the Bishop of Oxford asked the Dean of Windsor if he would allow me to do something about Eton Wick. The Dean agreed. The Bishop asked me to get the villagers to welcome the East Londoners, and work with them to build a new community. The church was the hub of the village. The few church members took up the challenge. They became chatty, welcoming, and helpful. They put their faith into action. The snowball effect began to work. Within a year the near empty church was full. They found Jesus for real.
The "feel" of the community was quite changed - and that change went on after I was asked by Archbishop Michael Ramsey to come back to the York diocese and Middlesbrough.

That move from Windsor Castle to a large housing estate on Teesside was very hard. It was like going from the sublime to the cor blimey! The church congregation was in good heart, but a lot of work was needed on the church fabric; the parish needed a new church hall too.
But there was very little money. The cupboard was bare.

I put out a call to the men of the parish to meet me to see about getting the building shipshape. The response was huge. All kinds of tradesmen were ready to help. They begged, borrowed, and got together the equipment and materials.
It took six months to do necessary repairs and to decorate.
 The estimated cost was £7000. They did it for £600!
The spin off was that nearly 30 men enjoyed working together as often as they could, at evenings and weekends. They discovered what faith was about as they became involved with the church and the worshipping community: and for good measure, they decided later to build a new parish hall for the use of everyone.
As the snowball rolled, it gathered supporters. Some found Jesus as a best friend, others were found by Him. That has always been the way of our Lord - finding Him somehow yourself, like Philip and Andrew, or surprisingly being found by Him, like Peter and Nathanael.

I wonder how it was for you?