

“Come and See – the Sequel”

Feb. 9th, 2020

John 4: 25-30, 39-42; John 11: 32-44

Rev. Kimberly Heath
Wall Street United Church

This week we are looking at two more stories in the book of John where we see the phrase “Come and see”. Copies of last week’s message on the first two “Come and see” stories are on the back table.

In the first story from last week Jesus gave the invitation to some disciples to come and see. In the second; one disciple goes to his friend Nathaniel and invites him to come and see Jesus. The third “come and see passage” we will look at today is in the story of the ‘Woman at the Well’ where Jesus meets a Samaritan woman at a well in her country.

This encounter should never have happened. Women in that time did not have conversations alone with men who were not in their immediate family. And Jesus was not even an acquaintance—he was a total stranger and to top it off he was a Jew, and she was a Samaritan.

Jews and Samaritans didn’t interact. I think they were too similar and yet too different. They have a common history but came down on different sides on some key religious and cultural issues.

Jesus crossed many lines in having that conversation. The first line he crossed was the border into Samaria. Going through Samaria was an undesirable short cut to where they needed to go. Do you take the long road and stick to your own territory or do you take the short cut through that place you’d rather not go?

I’m very fond of this story. We find out as the story goes on that this woman has some issues. Even before Jesus speaks there are hints. Jesus is sitting at the well at noon when along comes this woman to get water. Nobody goes to the well at noon. It’s just too hot and the work too heavy to be doing that. The women would go to the well in the cool of the morning and perhaps again in the evening, but not at noon. Women also deliberately go together – partly to protect themselves from the men. Going alone out to an isolated place is just not a good idea... unless the alternative is worse and this woman clearly believed the alternative would be indeed worse. She wanted to go alone – either the other women pushed her out or she was so ashamed that she needed to be alone.

The woman and Jesus are strangers, yet Jesus seems to know a lot about her. Jesus tells her that he could offer her living water that would well up inside so that she would never be thirsty. She’s intrigued and asks how

she could get that water. Jesus tells her to go and get her husband and she answers that she doesn't have a husband. Jesus responds "I know, you have had 5 husbands and the one you are living with now is not your husband."

At this the woman runs back to town and begins to tell everyone to come to the well: "Come and see this man who has told me everything about me. Could he be the Messiah?"

I want you to notice something. She doesn't know who exactly Jesus is. She doesn't have Jesus all figured out and yet she has experienced something profound and so invites people to 'Come and See'. Not only does she not wait to fully understand Jesus, she does not wait to get her own life sorted out. This woman's life is a mess. I don't doubt that she has had a very difficult life—who knows what kind of grief, hurt or trauma has been in her life. Her relationships with the people in the town are clearly not great and yet she invites them anyway!



Last week I used the image of the park bench. The park bench is an invitation to stop and sit and we imagined Jesus sitting on that park bench.

We imagined the conversation we would have and seeing the world through his eyes. We imagined learning to care about the things that Jesus cares about. We also imagined inviting a friend to join us on that bench to come and see Jesus.

In this story, the woman at the well doesn't just invite a friend or family member, she doesn't invite one or two people; she invites the whole town! She just can't help herself! Why? Because in one small conversation she has been changed. One small conversation with Jesus by the well and she has felt, seen and heard. Jesus knows her pain. He knows all about her: the good, the bad and the ugly, and yet he chose to talk to her. In fact, he needed her. He's thirsty and he has no bucket. I love that Jesus needs imperfect people.

This time the bench is an invitation to be transformed, to be made whole and to discover that even in our brokenness we are needed and have a purpose. I don't think there is anything so amazing as being transformed through Jesus. And even though she is not Miss Popularity of Samaria, the woman can't help but invite others to be transformed as well. The people of the town do come and see for themselves and are in turn changed.

That Jesus saw her brokenness and loved her in it was a surprise for the woman at the well. It was not surprise for Mary and Martha and all who were grieving the loss of Lazarus. That's the 4th and final "Come and See" passage in the book of John. Martha, Mary and Lazarus were close friends of Jesus. They had been following and learning from him for a long time. He'd come to their house and eaten their food and shared precious times with them.

Jesus comes to their house again. He had been away for a while and in that mean time Lazarus had fallen very ill and had died as a result of that illness. Jesus really felt this loss. When he hears the news from them the scripture says said: 'Jesus wept'. This time it is those who are grieving a great loss who say to Jesus "Come and see." Jesus asks them where they have laid Lazarus and they say to him "come and see". Come and see the tomb where Lazarus is lying. Come and see the place of our great pain.

That's what happens when we are in a relationship with Jesus, we can invite him to be with us in our pain. This time the image of the park bench changes and instead being invited to sit, we find ourselves sitting on the bench alone. There might be a lot of people in the park and walking by, but when we are grieving, we feel very much alone.

In fact, when you are grieving it's not just that you feel alone, people sometimes actively avoid you. I remember a friend who had lost her husband very suddenly and tragically, telling me that people would literally cross the street to avoid her in the weeks and months after his passing. Why do they do that? Maybe it's because people don't know what to say. Maybe your pain reminds them of their pain or they just can't handle getting close to that kind of pain. Maybe they know that they can't fix your problem and because we are so geared to trying to fix people, that we don't know what to do when there is no way to fix. When we can't fix, we avoid instead.

I hope you have people in your life who are willing to sit with you in your grief and just be with you. Just as much, I hope that you can invite Jesus to come and see where it hurts.

It's funny how much we need someone to witness our pain.

I love this little GIF I saw on Facebook



<https://media.giphy.com/media/QsIJorBDCitLQYRhsx/giphy.gif>

Kissing the boo boo doesn't really make the scrape go away but it does a lot to make us feel not so alone in our pain.

When you invite Jesus to come and see and sit with you in your pain he will. He absolutely will come and be with you. We have a shepherd who is willing to sit and walk with us in our darkest valleys. He won't leave us and if we are willing to follow he will help us to move through the pain. ...and he promises much more.



Almost a decade ago the Sault Ste. Marie newspaper ran a headline that said "Gordon Lightfoot is no longer Dead!"

A hoax had been played on Twitter where Gordon Lightfoot, the famous Canadian singer of songs like 'The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald' it was said, had died. A number of newspapers reported it the story and wrote Obituaries about it. Apparently, Gordon Lightfoot himself was listening to the radio when this was reported and called in to the radio station and told them he was feeling just fine. When they realized it was a hoax the Sault Ste. Marie newspaper ran the piece that began "Gordon Lightfoot is no Longer Dead!"

They could have changed the name to Lazarus and ran the same headline 2000 years ago. When Jesus went to the tomb where Lazarus was laid, very much dead. 4 days and starting to stink dead. Jesus called him out of the tomb and called him back to life. When you invite Jesus to "come and see" life happens.

Now I'm not suggesting you go hang out at the cemetery in anticipation, or perhaps in terror if you've watched too many zombie movies! That's not the way Jesus seems to work. But Jesus is the author of life. When you sit with him, when you invite him to sit with you, you will be surprised by the life that comes. He won't 'fix' you in that "abracadabra"-instant kind of way but if you let him, he will bring healing to your heart. He will bring hope to your despair. He will bring forgiveness and healing to your shame or your pain.

When Mary and Martha and the others told Jesus to come and see their pain, they had no idea what Jesus would do. For the woman at the well he healed and transformed not only her but a whole community. Are you willing to sit on that bench and ask Jesus to come and see where it hurts? Trust that that loving Presence of Jesus will not fail you.

Lamentations 3:19-24 The Voice (VOICE)

Grievous thoughts of affliction and wandering plagued my mind—
great bitterness and gall.

Grieving, my soul thinks back;
these thoughts cripple, and I sink down.

Gaining hope,

I remember *and wait for* this thought:

How enduring is God's loyal love;
the Eternal has inexhaustible compassion.

Here they are, every morning, new!

Your faithfulness, *God*, is as broad as *the day*.

Have courage, for the Eternal is all that I will need.

My soul boasts, "Hope in God; just wait."

Thanks be to God.