

“Come and See”

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John 1: 35-46

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Psalm 66:5 *“Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds among mortals.”*

Big box stores are impossible when you want to find some small random thing. Can I get an Amen? In many of them, (I think it was Home Depot that started the trend), employees are trained not to just tell you where to find that hair catcher thing-a-ma-jig for the bathtub, but to actually take you and lead you directly to the product. They figured out how frustrating it can be when we're told where it might be: “Oh, I think it's in aisle 72, about a kilometer or half-way up, but it could be in aisle 38 ... just walk that way and turn right where the hammers used to be!” Instead, they now say something like “Come and I'll show you.”



The phrase “come and see” is used twice in our Gospel reading from John this morning. A minister friend of mine, Rev. Greg Smith-Young, who serves a United Church in Elora, gave me this idea when he preached on the different passages of ‘Come and See’ at a Cruxifusion Conference.

I’m going to highlight two ‘Come and See’ passages today and I’ll look at another one or two next week.

The first ‘come and see’ passage happens when John the Baptist is with two of his own disciples (don’t know if you realized that John the Baptist had disciples!), and JB points Jesus out to his disciples and says: “*Look! Here is the lamb of God!*”, so his disciples say ‘buh bye’ to John the Baptist and they go after Jesus. JB is totally fine with this because he knows his whole life purpose is to prepare and point the way to Jesus. He says: “I must decrease and he must increase.” Now when Jesus notices John’s disciples following him, Jesus asks them, “What are you looking for?” they reply with their own question: “Rabbi, where are you staying?” Jesus responds: “*Come and see.*”

The second “Come and See” passage was the next day when they were in Galilee. Philip has discovered Jesus and Philip goes to his friend Nathanael and says to him: “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.” And

when Nathanael hears this he says “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip simply responds: “*Come and See!*”.

“Come and see”. So simple and so effective.

That’s the invitation we are given by Jesus, to come and follow and see and hear and experience life with Jesus.

Our temptation is to want to fully understand everything before we follow. We want to read the contract before we do anything that even hints of a commitment. But relationships don’t work like that. You can’t know all there is to know before you commit in a relationship. Those who are married know that to be true. Unless you had an arranged marriage, you had some time of dating and getting to know your future spouse. But at some point, you took the leap to make a life-long commitment, even though you didn’t know everything about the other person. You can be in a marriage with someone for decades and still not know them fully because each of us continues to grow and change and the relationship itself evolves.

We’ve been offered a relationship with Jesus—not a religion or a prescribed set of systems and rules — but a relationship.

The Franciscan priest and teacher Richard Rohr talks about how in faith we need to balance our knowing with our unknowing. With some things we have to accept that we will never fully ‘know’ in a way that makes us feel like we have control over the situation. God is so beyond knowing in that ‘fact-finding, I’ve-got-it-all-figured out’ kind of way. However, in another way, we can know God.

Imagine a park bench.



We have them all over Brockville. Maybe you have one in your own backyard. A park bench is an invitation to sit and rest. If someone is with you on that park bench — because they are designed for two or more to sit on — then a park bench is an invitation to rest and talk with someone and ponder about life.

Can you picture a favourite park bench? Or maybe just some favourite place where you could imagine such a bench ... just take a moment to bring the right bench in the right location to mind... And while you’re at the imagining – imagine better weather! Imagine summer, unless spring or fall is your favourite season ...

Now I want you to imagine Jesus sitting on that bench and inviting you to come and sit and talk and see. Will you accept the invitation? If you do, if you are willing to let Jesus be the teacher, you will see what he sees.

Because isn't that partly what you do when you connect with someone? You begin to see what they see.

Picture sitting on that bench, and Jesus pointing over there to those people, or to those children playing, or to those ducks. When you sit with Jesus, you will start to see the world the way that Jesus sees the world. I wonder what conversation we'd have and what we'd see if we sat next to Jesus?

When Jesus asked those first two followers, one of whom was Andrew: "What are you looking for?" They answered "Rabbi—teacher—where are you staying?" In other words, they were saying "You lead the way and we will follow." And Jesus said to them, 'Come and see.'

And then there's Nathanael. When Philip told him he had found the Messiah – Jesus from Nazareth—Nathanael says "Nazareth? Are you sure? Can anything good come from Nazareth?" And how does Philip respond? That's right: "Come and see". Which is pretty impressive because I think I'd be tempted to give 10 reasons why Nazareth is not such a bad place and why something good could potentially come from Nazareth! In other words, I'd take the bait and enter full-fledged into a debate about the merits of Nazareth and completely miss the point. Isn't that the way we often are as Christians? Instead of inviting people to come and see, we defend and argue about our beliefs?

Remember that park bench? As Christians we are called to invite someone else to come and sit on the bench with us and Jesus. Our task is not to talk or argue someone else into believing what we believe, but to invite them to come meet Jesus and experience a relationship with him themselves.

Always this has been the case. How do we do this? Learning how to share our God stories is part of it. Many of us grew up with a message that you shouldn't talk about politics or religion with friends. On one level it makes sense - - what we don't want is to create unnecessary divisions and debates.

But sharing your opinion is different from sharing your experience. I remember when my youngest Maisie was born. She was born in the early-ish days of Facebook. I gave birth around 1:30 in the morning and I was posting on FB all through the labour and after giving birth. Because England is 6 hours ahead of us, all of our English relatives saw the news before we had even had a chance to tell our close Canadian relatives, and the news spread quickly among the family in England. When we told my mother-in-law in the morning here in Waterloo, she immediately began phoning her relatives in England, and as she called them, they all said. "Oh

yes we know!” ... which I think rather annoyed my mother-in-law. But good news travels fast.

We have good news. I see a huge need in our culture for people to experience the love and life of Jesus in the context of an inclusive, welcoming and loving church community. There is just so much loneliness and disconnectedness and anxiety in the world -- why wouldn't we invite someone to experience a relationship that would make a difference?

The truth is that when you are excited about something, it's not so hard to invite someone to 'come and see'. Our office manager, Cathie, fairly regularly invited her hairdresser to come and check out our evening Celebrate Life service. She didn't bring it up at every visit, but she had it on her heart to invite him and had a strong sense that he would really enjoy it, so every once in a while, she'd bring it up and say something like: "You really should come and try our CL service."

One night he finally did. I remember the night pretty clearly. It was a wild service. One of the things I appreciate about Celebrate Life ... is that it's not very predictable. It was not a 'bad' wild, but I think everyone had eaten their Wheaties before coming... they were full of beans! I knew that Daniel was checking out CL for the first time and I remember in the middle of the service thinking to myself: "Oh my word, what a night for someone new to come...this will be the first and last night." But you know what? He loved it! And he's barely missed a service since then. I think I am very safe in saying this church family has been a real blessing to his life and he in turn has blessed us ... jumping in with both feet for Yuletide Fare and other occasions.

Who are you called to invite to come and see? Take a moment right now and let's ask the Holy Spirit if there is someone you know that he'd like you to invite to church or to come to a faith activity.....

The power of the invitation to 'come and see' is quite something. Do you remember the old hair commercial? I think it was popular way back in the 80's—where Heather Locklear tells about her first experience using Faberge Organic Shampoo with Wheat Germ and Honey. It was so good, she told two friends. They told two friends. And so on. And so on. And so on. Except for the flowing-haired actress, it sounds like what happened when people first started meeting Jesus. Inviting people to come and see is something we are called to, but it is also a very powerful thing to do.

How powerful? Someone offers you a choice. You can have a million dollars. Or, you can have a bare chessboard with a loonie on the first square. On the next square, 2 loonies. The next square, it doubles again: 4 loonies. It keeps on doubling, so on, and so on, and so on. At the end of 64

squares, you keep all the money. Which do you choose? A million dollars (and no math)? Or, the loonie doubling just sixty-four times? Take the loonie. And get a really big truck. Because by the end of all that doubling . . . you will have \$18,446,744,073,709,551,615. 1 [18 quintillion, 446 quadrillion, 744 trillion, 73 billion, 709 million, 551 thousand, 615 dollars]. You would have far more money than all the wealth in the world. That's the power of the invitation.

It might be nice to have that kind of money. But we are being offered the wealth of a relationship with the One who gives peace that passes understanding and a love that binds up broken hearts and heals our wounds. If you want that, take a seat on the bench next to Jesus, keep showing up here, in your devotions, in meditation and scripture. If you already know the richness of that faith and that relationship, invite someone else to come and sit with you and Jesus on the bench. Spread the wealth of Jesus. Spread the hope. Spread the love of Jesus! Amen.

