Come and See – Lent 2

John 1:35-51 Kimby Young

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Today’s scripture from John is early in Jesus’ ministry, as Jesus is just beginning to call disciples. In fact, even before Jesus calls. Before any miracles, or sermons, or acts of kindness, these two disciples of John start following Jesus. Literally, following, walking along behind and searching. One of the disciples is Andrew, and we don’t get the name of the other. Some people think it might be the gospel writer John himself because he didn’t include his own name. Some people think this might be John telling about the first time he met Jesus and how he came to be a disciple of Jesus. It’s his call story and Andrew’s – his testimony or witness about discipleship. Jesus sees that these two are searching, seeking, hoping, wondering, wanting something. Jesus sees something in these two men that Jesus encourages. Jesus says, “What are you looking for?” He knows they are searching. They don’t really answer. Maybe they are embarrassed. Maybe they don’t know exactly what they are looking for. But Jesus understands. Jesus sees that they want something more – truth, meaning in life, purpose, hope – maybe even they are looking for God. Jesus understands and Jesus says “Come and see.”

That’s the invitation of the gospel of John – come and see - and it appears several times throughout the gospel for would be disciples. Last week, we talked about Follow Me. Follow me means - go where Jesus goes. Do what Jesus did. Follow where Jesus leads. Answer God’s call by following Jesus. It is action and commitment.

In the gospel of John the invitation to disciples is Come and See. It’s a two-part calling. First come – draw near to Jesus, make the effort, try, be willing. Come. And then see – as you get closer to Jesus you begin to see – to understand, to notice the presence of God, to notice how Jesus lives and calls you to live, to see God’s work in your life and to look forward to where God is calling you to share love and life. Come and See.

Notice in the story, that the phrase Come and see is used not only by Jesus in verse 39, but also by Philip in verse 46. That is one of the wonderful things about Jesus’ invitation to us. It is not only through direct call that God reaches us – like Andrew and the other disciple. That invitation from God grows and expands from person to person. Andrew tells Peter and brings Peter to Jesus. And we all know how many people Peter reached. Then after Jesus calls Philip, Philip tells Nathaniel. You see, the invitation to come to Jesus, starts from Jesus, yes. But it is usually passed on by someone else. Part of our job as disciples of Jesus is to invite other people to come to Jesus – to come and see. We must share our faith and invite everyone to come closer and see Jesus. All we have to do is invite. Jesus will do everything else.

Come and see.

In the scripture it is pretty straight forward. Someone says come and see. And the person either does or does not come. We see in the scripture that Nathaniel puts up a little more fight – questioning why, questioning Jesus, expressing doubt. But he does come to Jesus. And because Nathaniel meets Jesus and interacts with Jesus, he is able to see the power of God in Jesus and begins to understand who Jesus is.

The journey of discipleship is the same for us today. We must first come to Jesus, be in the presence of God, before we can begin to see and understand God’s call upon our lives. The first step is to come.

What helps you to come to Jesus, to know that you are with God? What helps you to draw closer to God? It might be worship. It might be quiet time. It might be Bible study. It might be prayer. It might be music. It might be nature. It might be helping someone else and knowing that you make a difference. It might be being with others who are praising God.

There are many many ways of knowing that you are in the presence of God, many many ways of turning to God. One key is openness, willingness, turning to God, seeking, asking. Look at the scripture – Jesus recognized that in Andrew. Jesus saw the seekers. That is one of the first steps – wanting to be with God.

And that can happen anywhere along the journey. Even for those of us who have known Jesus for years, there might come a time when we want more – when we want to know God more. So we come. God recognizes that willingness and pours grace over us.

To all who are seeking – even today – Jesus extends the invitation – Come. Come and see.

Come into God’s presence. Find a place where you can be with God. Since God is everywhere –really anywhere is ok. But find a place that feels right for you. It is less about finding God – because God is always with us so God is easy to find. It is more about finding a place and time where you are open to God. Be open to God. You will see that God is right here. Put ourselves in a place and frame of mind to be with God. Make yourself ready. Come to Jesus.

God will find you. God will love you. And God will give you what you need – whatever you need. Whether that’s forgiveness or healing or belonging or purpose or whatever – God will give you what you need. Come and see.

That brings me to the “See” part of the sermon. How do you see God? And how do you see that God is God? There is no proof. In the scripture for today, Nathaniel wants some kind of proof. It happens again and again in the Bible and in life. We want proof. We want to see God – with our eyes and ears and hearts.

The problem is there is no proof. There is no way to argue someone into faith or convince someone who doesn’t want to believe. There is no way to make someone see if they don’t want to see. But if you want to see – God is everywhere and always. For those of us who do believe – and know and experience God, we cannot help but see. I see God absolutely everywhere and all the time.

For me the next question is - how do I help others to see? How do I show them God? In the scripture we see Andrew telling Peter. We see Philip telling Nathaniel. That is our call, to try to help others see God in Jesus Christ. Come and see.

What do we see when we see Jesus? We see love. We see healing. We see forgiveness. We see acceptance. We see inspiration. We see renewal. We see hope. We see life.

And how do we help others to see Jesus? By doing what Jesus did. Loving, healing, forgiving, caring, accepting, sharing, offering hope and joy to all. It is in the actions of Jesus that we see God’s love. It is in our loving actions that other people might see God. We are invited to follow Jesus in the way of love, to show love to the world, to be loving in every possible way. This is the call of God for the people of God. That through you, others may - Come and see Jesus.