

“Come and See”

1.15.17

John 1:29-42 New Living Translation (NLT)

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 He is the one I was talking about when I said, ‘A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.’ 31 I did not recognize him as the Messiah, but I have been baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel.”

32 Then John testified, “I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting upon him. 33 I didn’t know he was the one, but when God sent me to baptize with water, he told me, ‘The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and rest is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ 34 I saw this happen to Jesus, so I testify that he is the Chosen One of God.”

35 The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. 36 As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, “Look! There is the Lamb of God!” 37 When John’s two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus.

38 Jesus looked around and saw them following. “What do you want?” he asked them. They replied, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?”

39 “Come and see,” he said. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place where he was staying, and they remained with him the rest of the day.

40 Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. 41 Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means “Christ”).

42 Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, “Your name is Simon, son of John—but you will be called Cephas” (which means “Peter”).

Leader: The Word of God for the People of God.

People: Thanks be to God.

Last Sunday, we introduced this sermon series called “The Great Invitation.” In the next few weeks, we will be discussing what it means to follow Jesus; we’ll be considering why we said YES to Jesus; we’ll begin telling our faith stories with others; and we’ll be inviting someone to ‘come and see’ for himself/herself why we decided to follow Jesus.

The problem is not many of us really feel comfortable sharing our faith. It is just too difficult for some of us. We don’t want to offend anyone. We don’t want to jeopardize our friendships. We have no idea how to do this thing called “Evangelism.”

One definition: *“One beggar showing another beggar where to find bread.”*

Chesser: “Quite simply, an evangelist is a disciple who shares the good news of Jesus Christ with someone else. It is inviting others in the most authentic way we can to come and see the Jesus we have seen!”

“To share faith effectively, each of us must be able to say why we made a decision to follow Jesus. We must learn to share our story with others. And we must find ways to connect our personal story

with the bigger faith tradition we share that is found in the Bible, in the tradition, and in the other historic documents of the church.” Rev. Dawn Chesser, Discipleship Ministries

Last week I issued a challenge to all of us: First, that we consider why we have chosen to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and what difference it makes in our life. Own your personal faith story and begin to practice sharing those stories. Second, that we prayerfully consider inviting someone to worship with us.

So, *Why are you a Christian? Why do you practice your faith as a United Methodist?*

The truth is, each of us will have different answers, different experiences, different reasons, and different stories from the Bible that help shape our story. And we may relate to a specific story/character from the Bible.

What story from the Bible inspires you? Where do you find your faith story mirrored in the biblical witness? What characters from the Bible do you really connect with? Whose story grabs you and makes you want to learn more?

In this morning’s scripture lesson, we find several testimonies about who Jesus is and how some of the disciples came to follow him. Maybe one of these will connect with you and your own faith story.

Like last week, we are back at the Jordan River, where John the Baptist is proclaiming a baptism of repentance. When asked who he was, he was clear. He said “I am not the Messiah, Elijah or the Prophet. I baptize with water, but One is coming who is much greater than I. I am not worthy to untie His sandal.” (1.26,27) “He will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” (Matt. 3.11) “I came so that He might be revealed.” (1.31) (NRSV Life Application Bible - © 1990 Tyndale House Publishers; John; pp 1817-1820) He came to prepare for the coming of the Messiah.

The religious leaders missed the point. They were more concerned with WHO John was and WHY he was baptizing. “*John only emphasized WHY he had come - to prepare the way for Jesus.*”

While “*the religious leaders wanted to know who John was, John wanted them to know who Jesus was.*” (John 1.21-23) (NRSV Life Application Bible - © 1990 Tyndale House Publishers; John; pp 1817-1820)

“The next day” John is standing with a few of his disciples. Suddenly, he spots Jesus and boldly announces Who He is. “Here is the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.” (1.29) (NRSV Life Application Bible - © 1990 Tyndale House Publishers; John; pp 1817-1820) So John has a lot to say in his testimony. He has his reasons, personal reasons, for calling Jesus the Messiah.

“Maybe you can identify with John’s testimony. Maybe you have seen or experienced something that personally confirmed for you that Jesus is the Messiah, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” Rev. Dawn Chesser, Discipleship Ministries

Some people do have a story like John’s, one in which they have witnessed clearly who Jesus is, maybe saw the heavens opened.

If that is your faith story, share it with others as you invite them to “come and see” who Jesus is.

But maybe you don’t find your faith story in John’s story. Maybe you connect with the next story.

The next day John was standing with two of his disciples. Then, Jesus walked by. John once again declared: “*The Lamb of God!*”

This time the two disciples decided to follow Jesus. (1.35-37) (NRSV Life Application Bible - © 1990 Tyndale House Publishers; John; pp 1817-1820)

“It’s almost as if John is presenting them to Jesus and saying to them: *‘You are prepared. Now go! He is the One we have been waiting for.’*”

(Communicator’s Commentary, John, © 1985 Word, Inc; Roger Fredrikson, volume 4, Gospel of John; ch. 2 “The Beginnings” pp. 50 -64)

Maybe the reason these two disciples of John the Baptist left to follow Jesus is they trusted John. Maybe you can identify with this story from the point of view of friendship. For some of us, it is easier to share our personal beliefs with those with whom we have a relationship of trust. (Chesser)

The story continues with Jesus turning around and spotting John’s disciples following after him. Jesus asks them what they are looking for. (Chesser)

“What are you looking for?” “What do you want?” “What are you seeking?” “Why are you following Me?” (1.38) *“Do you know what I’m about?” “Who I really am?” “Do you realize the cost of leaving John to follow Me?” “Are you seeking for security or a new cause?”* (Communicator’s Commentary, John, © 1985 Word, Inc; Roger Fredrikson, volume 4, Gospel of John; ch. 2 “The Beginnings” pp. 50 -64)

It’s not enough to just follow. We must follow for the right reasons. Otherwise, we might be really asking “...Christ to follow us... to align with us, to build our cause, not His.”

Why are we following Him? It is for **His** glory or for **ours**?” (NRSV Life Application Bible - © 1990 Tyndale House Publishers; John; pp 1817-1820)

“What are you seeking? Why are you following Me?”

Interestingly enough, they don’t really answer directly. Rather, they call him “teacher” and respond with a question. *“Where are you staying?” “Where did You come from?” “What is Your purpose?” “Can we get to know You?”* (Communicator’s Commentary, John, © 1985 Word, Inc; Roger Fredrikson, volume 4, Gospel of John; ch. 2 “The Beginnings” pp. 50 -64)

“Where are you staying?”

“Come and See” Jesus invited them.

“Ask your questions. Let me help you find out Who I am.” (Communicator’s Commentary, John, © 1985 Word, Inc; Roger Fredrikson, volume 4, Gospel of John; ch. 2 “The Beginnings” pp. 50 -64)

What is interesting is when they ask Him where he is staying, He invites them to *“come and see.”*

What an amazing turn of events, because it turns out that during this extended time in the presence of Jesus, they really become his followers.

Unlike the story we’ll hear next week from Matthew’s Gospel, where Jesus walks by and calls out to some fishermen, *“Come and follow me and I will teach you to fish for people!”* and they drop their nets, quit their jobs, leave their families and follow Him without getting to know Him....

Here we see an investment in relationship first, before the men decide to follow Jesus. (Chesser)

Sometimes people need a little time. Others need a LOT of time! So, we need to be patient with people and give them the time and space they need. There’s no hurry. Jesus invites us to take all the time we need. (Chesser)

Have you spent time in the presence of the Lord? Is this a story that you can connect to? (Chesser)

In the final segment of this passage, we find the story of Andrew.

Andrew had been a disciple of John’s, until he heard John’s declaration of Who Jesus was. He believed and followed. He HEARD. He BELIEVED. He FOLLOWED.

Then he didn't keep it to himself. He SHARED.

This was too good NOT to share.

He went to tell his brother Simon *"we have found the Messiah. Come and see for yourself."*

Andrew brought his brother to Jesus.

Because Andrew invited his brother to meet Jesus, Simon's life was changed.

Jesus knew Simon and then gave him a new name and purpose.

"You are now Cephas, or Peter, which means 'Rock'." (1.35-42) (NRSV Life Application Bible - © 1990 Tyndale House Publishers; John; pp 1817-1820)

How does Jesus reach out to us? It isn't always through a direct communication. Sometimes Jesus reaches out through other people, especially his followers. Sometimes it will be through us, his disciples in the world today, that others are able to learn about Jesus. Maybe it will be you who tells your brother or sister, *"I have found the Messiah! Come with me and see for yourself!"* (Chesser)

Evangelism. The e-word. It isn't as bad as we think. It doesn't have to be as difficult or complicated as we want to make it. It isn't about manipulation, coercion or fear. It isn't about making a rash decision on the spot.

It isn't about what we do to "save" someone.

It is simply pointing people to Jesus. Bringing a friend to Jesus. Sharing good news with someone else. The good news is that Jesus invites us to come and see for ourselves who He is! He reaches out to each of us in just the way we need Him to.

How is he reaching out to you?

How is he inviting followers *through* you? (Chesser)

Two Challenges

First, consider why you have chosen to follow Jesus (be a disciple) and what difference it makes in your life. What is your own personal faith story?

Second, continue praying about someone you might invite to worship with us.

"Come and see what our God has done. What awesome miracles He does for His people."

"Come and listen... and I will tell you what He did for me." (Psalm 66.5,16)

Come and See. Come and listen. Come and follow.

Our mission is to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Before we can make disciples, though, we must become disciples. We must choose to follow Jesus.

To walk in His way. To live Holy lives. To faithfully serve others.

We must accept His love and grace for ourselves. We must receive His forgiveness and respond to His invitation to a relationship of love and grace. "Come and See." Amen.