

Come and See(k)  
A Sermon for January 15, 2017  
John 1:29-42  
Lansdowne UMC

Let's put ourselves in the story in John chapter 1. Let's imagine ourselves in the shoes of one of the disciples of John the Baptist. We know that one is named Andrew, but the other one is unnamed, so it's easy to put yourself in their shoes.

Let me share your story with you a little bit. You've had a pretty good run hanging around this guy, John. His ministry really seems to be taking off. More and more people are coming to him at the Jordan River to be baptized. It seems like John is really making some progress. Rumors about John had reached all the way to Jerusalem! Important people-- really important people!-- have been coming out to see what John is doing.

They've wanted to know who John is. You get really impressed with John, because he could have gained a lot more followers if he'd just used this opportunity to promote himself a bit. Those people from Jerusalem were wondering if John is the Messiah. But John denies it. They were wondering if John was the prophet that Moses said would come. John denies that too. They're wondering if John sees himself as Elijah. He denies that too.

You've always been surprised that he doesn't take more credit. It seems like for him this really isn't about being famous or having lots of followers himself. It really seems to be about the message. That's been

the amazing thing about being around John. He's got this single-minded vision and he just sticks to it come hell or high water. He just stays at the Jordan, baptizing. He stays at the Jordan, crying out for people to prepare themselves to receive the one who is coming after him. Maybe that's what brought you to him in the first place.

John has been an intriguing person to follow. Difficult, but intriguing. His message is clear, but as a messenger.... You still can't believe that he survives off of honey and... uh... locusts. Locust breath is the worst. Between that, his booming voice, and the camel-hair coat and leather belt, he's a pretty big assault on your senses.

But no matter if it's the message or his appearance, he's the type of guy who doesn't seem bothered by sticking his neck out. You imagine that one day soon, he's probably going to stick his neck out too far and lose his head.

So you're standing with John at the river. And this normal-looking guy starts walking toward you. You wouldn't have even noticed him, except John starts pointing at him and saying "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!" Everyone else has come to baptism to have turn away from their own sins-- but John says that somehow this man is going to take the sin of the world away completely. You're intrigued.

And then something amazing happens. Before your very eyes the God's Spirit falls on Jesus and stays with him. And you hear a voice from heaven declare him to be God's Son.

After that, John's message has adapted, because he's found the one he was looking for. It wasn't anything Jesus said or did yet. John simply recognized him, and then the Spirit and the Voice confirmed it. This is God's Son. This is the one who will baptize not just water, but with the Holy Spirit. You wonder what that could mean. At the very least, you think, it must mean that God's power will be at work in some new, amazing ways.

Well the next day Jesus walks by, and John points to him again and calls him the Lamb of God. You're so star-struck that you don't say anything. *This* is the one the John the Baptist has been seeking! You share a knowing glance with Andrew and take off after Jesus.

He eventually hears you walking behind him, and he turns. What is he going to say?

"What are you seeking?" he says.

This guy gets right to the point doesn't he? You try to form the words. This is what you sound like: "Uh... um.. I'm uh seeking... to know where you're staying!" Smooth.

Jesus pauses and seems to consider you thoughtfully.

You want to kick yourself for being so star-struck. "What a silly question to ask," you say to yourself. John has just proclaimed Jesus to be the Lamb of God, the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. You're quite possibly talking to God's Son. And what do you do? You make small talk. At least you could have said something like "To love the

Lord my God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love my neighbor as myself.” You could have said, “I want to be your disciple.” You could have said, “I want to know how you will be the Lamb of God who will take away the sin of the world.” Anything but small talk!

You think about your words, and you realize there is a deeper meaning. Might Jesus hear it? Deep down you’re worried that Jesus might leave you and you might not know where he is. You’re not just asking *where* he’s staying, but *if* he’s going to remain with you. You hope that the double-meaning of the words might save you some face. Or maybe Jesus will just tell us his address after all.

But then Jesus opens his mouth and speaks. “Come.... and see,” Jesus said. You breathe a huge sigh of relief. And then as you think about it, you gasp with excitement. You’ve just been invited into Jesus’ house. Jesus is treating you like family.

And so you go and he lets you stay with him for the whole day. You’re always going to remember that moment when he invited you to be with him. It was about 4 in the afternoon.

After having met and gotten to know Jesus, you’re... well... it’s hard to put into words. You just *have to* tell someone. Andrew was so excited that he immediately went and told his brother Simon.

You go and tell people too. One day, you think, once this all makes some more sense, you’re going to need to write it all down. You’ll need to leave out details about yourself, of course. You go and tell your own brother too, but saying so would identify who you are. If you’ve learned

anything from John the Baptist, it's that the message is not about you, it's about Jesus.

--

Jesus... asked you... a question. "No, Pastor David. That's just in the story." Well get this. You remember that famous bit of scripture at the beginning of this chapter? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And then that mind-boggling verse a little bit later: "And the Word became flesh and lived among us."

Aren't you excited to hear what the Word-that-became-flesh is going to say first? Wouldn't we be expected to pay attention? Well here is the very first thing he says in the book: "What are you seeking?" Not "what do you know?" Not "what can you offer me?" Not "what do you believe?" Simply "what are you looking for? What are you seeking?" Jesus takes seekers seriously.

And just to bring home the point that Jesus is asking *you* the question, John the Evangelist-- John the writer of the fourth Gospel-- leaves a space for you in the story with an unnamed disciple. Later in the Gospel of John there will be an unnamed "beloved disciple." Sure, it's probably talking about John the Gospel-writer, but it's also you. It's the character that you should want to be in the story.

Jesus says "What are you seeking?" and these disciples in the story response is... unimpressive. It's no profession of allegiance unto death. It's not an answer that displays any knowledge of Jesus or Scripture. "Where are you staying?"

But Jesus is so gracious! Jesus is so hospitable. It's as if he sees that their hearts are pointing a little bit in the right direction, and so he seizes on it. Jesus draws them into a deeper relationship. He's saying, "you don't really know what you want yet. That's ok. Come be with me. Walk and talk with me. See how I work in the world. Then you'll know." "Come and see," he says. "Come and spend some time with me. Get to know me."

Jesus doesn't give them the factual answer that they might be looking for. He doesn't say "go down straight street and hang a left when you get to the Camel hitch, then mine is the 5th house on the left with the blood painted over the door posts." Jesus' first concern is relationship-- not dispensing information. "Come and see."

I wonder if, just maybe, we might learn from Jesus. How do we draw people into a deeper relationship with Jesus? We can try to answer their questions. Sooner or later, though, there is probably going to be a question we can't answer. Or there will be a question where a head-on answer just won't do the trick.

Actually this exact thing happens a little bit later in this chapter of John. The passage we read was long already, but if we continued on, we'd see that Jesus found another follower-- Phillip. Philip in turn finds Nathanael. Nathanael is skeptical of Jesus. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" he says.

Do you know what Philip's response was? He takes his cue from Jesus. "Come and See," he says.

What do disciples of Jesus ultimately seek? They seek to know Jesus more.

But when we get to know Jesus more, we find that we want others to know Jesus more too. It's as if we've been let in on this secret that isn't a secret at all. Andrew and Philip show us that when you spend time with Jesus, you have to tell someone about it. You have to share. (And if you don't feel that way, I want to humbly offer to you that you might need to spend some more time with Jesus. Hear what he has to say. Talk to him. Tell him what you're seeking and hear what he says.)

We share for many of the same reasons that we click "Share" on Facebook. We want other people to experience what we've experienced. We want other people see see what we've seen.

So what do you share about Jesus? Usually the best plan is just to tell your story. I myself started by seeking information. Reading scripture. I guess you could say I wanted Jesus to tell me his address. But the more time I spent with Jesus, the more he showed me what I really wanted. I wanted to be clean from the guilt of my sin. I wanted to be free to live for God. And so when Jesus took my sin away, he showed me what I really wanted: I wanted Jesus himself. I wanted God. And so now I want all that God is. I want all that God has for me. And I want to be all I can for God. I want to drink from the stream of living water. I want to feast on the bread of life. I want to rest in the purifying presence of the Holy Spirit. I want to be empowered for mission.

We each need to be looking for opportunities to tell our story, and then to say "Come and See." Me being in a pulpit doesn't let me off the hook.

You not being in a pulpit doesn't let you off the hook. Andrew shares with someone who knows him better than anyone else in the world: his brother Simon, whom Jesus will name Peter. Philip finds Nathanael, who he seems to know, and tells him about Jesus.

Come and see. And when you do, tell others to come and see.