

FOCUS: The Good News is we are called to “come and see”—to be in fellowship with God.

This morning’s Gospel is one full of images and ideas about which we could focus our attention. John the Baptist witnesses to all who will listen who Jesus is. We also hear how Andrew, a disciple of John the Baptist, brought news of Jesus to his brother, Simon Peter. And, we hear several different descriptions about Jesus—Lamb of God, Son of God, one on whom the Spirit descended and remained, just to mention a few. However, I would like to focus our attention this morning on three words: “Come and see.”<sup>1</sup> These simple words offer us so much insight.

“Come and see,” Jesus tells the two disciples of John the Baptist. The two who followed Jesus were curious about him, having been disciples of John. Without an invitation, they simply started to follow as Jesus walked. They may have been talking quietly to one another, or perhaps the sound of their footsteps caught Jesus’ attention. And then Jesus turned to them and asked them “What are you looking for.” He didn’t ask them “What do you want?” or “What can I do for you.” Rather, he asked them “What are you looking for.” Or, as my mother the English teacher would have correctly said, “For what are you looking?”

And the two responded with what sounds to our ears to be an odd question, “Where are you staying.” Why on earth would they want to know where Jesus was staying? Were they homeless or itinerants, and in need of a place to rest that night? Did they expect Jesus to provide them a meal and a bed? Why was this an important question for the Evangelist to include in his narrative?

The two disciples, one of whom we know is Andrew, have been with John the Baptist for some time. They have heard John preach and teach about a man who comes after him, yet was before him. They have heard John tell of the One who was to come who would baptize with fire and the Holy Spirit. They hear John identify Jesus as the “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” They want to follow this man. And not simply follow Jesus in the sense of walking behind or with him, but in the deeper sense of following him as students—as *disciples* of the Rabbi. It was the tradition of the times for students to seek out their teachers and ask the teacher if they could be their students. For Andrew and the other man, nothing seemed out of the ordinary to seek out this man Jesus and follow him as a disciple.

But, before they could ask Jesus if they could be disciples, Jesus preempts them and asks them for what they are looking. What do these two men want? Jesus wants to know. Before the two men can speak, Jesus speaks to them, and in his first words, essentially extends the call for them to follow him. More than a simple request, Jesus asks of a basic need of human beings. He might have well asked them, “Are you looking for a relationship with God.” And they answer this invitational question with a question that is so telling. In replying, “Where are you staying?” they are telling Jesus that, yes indeed, they want to abide—to stay—with God. Jesus responds to their inquiry with an imperative. “Come and see.”

In the Synoptics—the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke—the call to discipleship comes in Jesus’ words “Follow me.” For John, the phrase “Come and see” is used for reasons we will soon explore. For the Evangelist, “come and see” is the all-

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<sup>1</sup> John 1:39a (NRSV)

embracing challenge to faith.<sup>2</sup> In Johannine theology, to “see” Jesus with perception is a description of faith. New Testament scholar Raymond Brown notes that to be a disciple of Jesus, the Evangelist describes, is to *go* to Jesus, *see* where Jesus is staying, and *stay* with him during his ministry. Then, one’s training as a disciple ends when one sees Jesus in his glory and *believes* in him.<sup>3</sup>

John has taught his disciples well, and now he has brought them to see Jesus and become disciples of the One who is greater. He points to Jesus and declares, “Look! The Lamb of God!” In doing so, he is telling his disciples that they are no longer to follow him, but to follow Jesus, for whom John has been preaching, teaching, baptizing, and preparing the way. The Baptist’s words are also a reminder to us to redirect ourselves from our own “mini-gods” and distractions of life. John tells it like it is, and points out the obvious. And, in response to John’s declarations, Andrew and others seek out Jesus.

How do *you* respond to the call of Jesus to “come and see”? What brought you here this morning? How did you come to develop *your* faith? Why are you a *disciple* of Jesus Christ?

For some of us, our faith comes from what we were taught as young children. Our parents took their baptismal vows seriously, and raised us in the fellowship of the church, brought us to worship, taught us the Ten Commandments, Lord’s Prayer, and the Apostles’ Creed. As we grew older, our parents placed in our hands the Holy Scriptures, so that we might learn to read and understand the Word on our own. To “come and see” for some of us is as much instinctive as it is a learned behavior.

Others of us, however, “come and see” without a lifetime of experience and understanding. Rather than being raised in the church from birth, we have come into this fellowship—and not the fellowship of Abiding Presence Lutheran Church, but the fellowship of the Christian faith itself—because of an invitation from someone else to “come and see” what is happening in this place. Or, rather than an invitation, we have been drawn by the physical location of the church, a sign on the street, an advertisement in the paper, or some other passive invitation to “come and see” what is happening here. Or, for some, it has been a feeling, a desire, a “tugging” if you will, to “come and see” what is offered here, because what we have been offered by the secular world is simply not enough.

I will be quite honest with you. It really isn’t important how you have heard the call of Jesus to “come and see.” If I have learned anything in my forty years as a child of God and brother of Christ, it is that the Holy Spirit works in many different ways to open hearts and minds to the call of Jesus to discipleship—to be a student of the Teacher. The Good News, my dear sisters and brothers, is that God *wants* to be in a relationship with all of creation. *God chose you*, my dear friends. In baptism, we become children of God and coheirs with Christ for all that God has promised. We receive God’s grace—unlimited, undeserved, and unending. We receive the promise of life everlasting. This is the call to “come and see.”

Until we see the glory of God with our own eyes, our studies as disciples—students—of Jesus are unending. To be a disciple of Jesus is to be on a continuous response to “come

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<sup>2</sup> *Anchor Bible* 29:79

<sup>3</sup> *Anchor Bible* 29:79 and John 2:11 (NRSV)

and see.” To be a disciple is to be like Andrew and, in response to the invitation to “come and see,” to reach out to others and invite them to “come and see” as well. As Paul writes to the Corinthians, “God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”<sup>4</sup> So, dear sisters and brothers, come and see all that God has promised.

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:9 (NRSV)