

A Sermon for DaySpring

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“Come and See”

John 1: - 35-39

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John the Baptist sets a good example for all of us. He frees folks up to move beyond him.

You know this charismatic character. Everyone’s flocking out to the desert to listen to him preach and call a spade and spade and a sinner a sinner. They’re lining up to be baptized as a sign that they’re sorry for their sins. He’s a religious hit.

But John knows his role... so when Jesus comes along he points and says **“there... there’s the Lamb of God... there’s the One who can take away your sins.”** He points to the Christ... and he says along the way...

“I must decrease...

I must diminish...

fade into the background...

in order for Jesus to be prominent.”

He sets a good example for us all as he points his followers beyond himself. This is what we do as Christians... as parents and teachers and spouses... as church... We proclaim message and we play our role and then we point beyond us because we know we’re not what they need finally... they need the Ultimate.

It takes a healthy person... parent... spouse... prophet to do that.

John’s maturity prompts our gospel reading for today. Jesus is walking by and John gives two of his disciples the nod... **“There’s the One I’ve been telling you about.”** And off they go... following Jesus.

Did they turn around? Did they? Did they look back at John like, **“Is this okay?”** They’d learned so much from John... been following him. I suspect they’d found a great deal of meaning, you know how it is.

You have an influential teacher or mentor.

You’ve read some writer... some author that has resonated with you.

Went to camp and the speaker really rung your bell.

Found a church home that seemed perfect.

It’s like God Himself is reaching out to you through this... speaking to you... touching your life.

But then the day comes... the day will always come... when it won’t be enough.

That inspirational speaker will seem... old hat. You won’t even cry the last night of camp.

You’ll find out that most authors write the same book over and over.

That church you joined will let you down. It’ll be what it is, imperfect... flawed... human.

The day always comes... when finite things point intentionally or unintentionally beyond themselves to the Divine... Just like John did. **“There’s another, time for me to decrease... There’s another... One that can take away your sin, remove your brokenness.”**

His two disciples do what we all have to do if we’re to live... they let go of what had been so important. They moved away from John. And in so doing, I suspect, saved their good relationship to John.

If we cling to what has been a gift, we’ll turn it into an idol, and when the idol doesn’t save us (because of course it can’t) we’ll hate it... and the thing that once blessed us (and still can be a channel of blessing) will become a curse.

It happens... this day always comes.

We have to keep moving and usually it means moving away from that place where we started the journey. That’s so normal, right. Leaving one thing and cleaving to another.

Hopefully, it means moving towards what is truer and ultimate... and hopefully with not too many detours... we find ourselves behind, the One... the Christ.

I think we will find ourselves there if we're hungry enough for life. That's where these two disciples are... tagging along. If we can get hungry enough or know our own hunger that's likely where we'll find ourselves.

Of course, not everyone knows their soul hunger.

The poet Rumi writes, ***"The mouse is nothing but a nibbler. To the mouse is given a mind proportionate to its need..."***

When folks get hungry enough (and those hunger pains are a great gift), they find a spiritual path to walk. They move. They follow.

Two hungry guys were following Jesus. He looks over his shoulder and keeps walking, smiling to himself. Every now and then, he glances back just to see if they're still there.

I want to picture Jesus being a bit playful here... maybe he walks in a circle just to see what they'll do. Kind of... first century "Follow the Leader." He's thinking, **"Wonder how long they'll stay back there."**

Finally, he turns around and he asks an amazingly simple question, **"What do you want?"**

How would you answer that? I mean if the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, the One you've been tagging along behind turned and asked with a smile, **"What do you want?"** How would you answer? Would you ask for some theological clarification?

"Um, uh, we'd like to know the true nature of the Divine. Our scriptures seem to describe God in lots of different ways."

"Could you please talk to us about the problem of evil. I want to know why bad things happen to good people."

What would you do? How would you answer? Would you get personal

"I need some direction."

"I want some meaning."

"I don't want to hurt anymore."

What would you say? What would you ask? Why are you following Jesus? **"Cuz I just want to."** **"Seemed like a good idea."** **"I don't know, it's what we do in the Bible Belt..."** **"I'm an American, aren't I?"**

Hey wake up... Jesus just turned around and asked you a question. **"What do you want?"**

Maybe this is where we all begin... finally aware of our hunger. Awakened to our need. How is it that Jesus is going to work in your life if you can't even wake up to what you need?

"What do you want... why are you following me?"

"I feel guilty if I don't..." *"uuuuuuunnnnnkkkkk, wrong answer."*

"Um... John told me too." *"uuuunnkk"*

"Habit." *"unk"*

"uuuuuuunnnnnnnkkkkkkk... wrong answer, what do you want?"

This may just be the only honest place Jesus can begin with any of us. Saying what we need. Can you do that... today? **"Here's where I am Jesus... this is what I want."**

These two followers have an interesting response, **"We want to know where you are staying."** The word really is dwell... **"We want to know where you dwell."**

Where are you from? Where are you going? What's home base for you? Where do you dwell? I don't think they're asking for his room number down at the Days Inn.

His answer is amazing. It's a simple invitation to them... and to anyone who's ever picked up John's gospel. **"Come and see."** No long treatise... no "four spiritual laws"... no apologetics... no sermons. Just... **"come and see."** This is Jesus doing evangelism.

An invitation to open our eyes...

An invitation to encounter and be present to what God does...

Just see...

Jesus trusts in a way we don't. There's no anxious, **"I better get them in while I've got the chance... got to close the deal"** kind of thinking. Just, come check this out.

Some of you are here today and you need to hear that for the first time. **"Just come hang out and see for yourself."** Some of you need to just back up and find what the Zen Buddhists call "the beginner's mind." Choose some naiveté again. Start over... Jesus is too crusted over with VBS macaroni crosses and too misinterpreted by angry preachers.

John is doing "this" to you... **"Come and see."**

And John's entire book then becomes this great visual... where scene after scene Jesus answers their question about where he dwells. They see who he is... who God is and who they are. And by the way, there's never a knowing of God without a deeper knowing of self. And never a knowing of true self, without a knowing of God. (R. Rohr) Real epiphanies are windows and mirrors.

So the curtain goes up and down on John's stage and we see God and we see ourselves.

First, there's a wedding at Cana, with empty pots, six empty vessels that held water for purification... the old way of getting clean and righteous and Jesus transforms it into new wine. The best stuff from the old stuff. Celebration from emptiness... joy from nothingness... a peak at who we are and who he is.

Then Jesus goes into the Temple where folks are abusing power and Jesus dismantles it. Who we are... what he's going to do.

Then Nicodemus finds Jesus at night... in his darkness... stuck in his head with all his theories and theologies and Jesus says, **"You have to have a rebirth... and you aren't in charge of it... only God can do this."** And there we are, heady as can be... and there Jesus is offering something truer than thinking.

The curtain comes down and back up and Jesus is sitting at a well with a woman who's in pain because her life is a mess and who's playing games... who's living a lie, needing someone to give her life from the outside... always outside... external... and Jesus tells her it doesn't have to be that way and there is a well springing up within her.

This is what his followers start seeing.

There's a crippled man who's been sitting by a magic pool for 38 years. Jesus heals him, but not before he sees right through him. **"Do you want to be well? Really... implying that maybe being crippled is his preferred way of doing life but he can't see it."**

Insight into self and insight into God.

Feeding the five thousand. Hunger meets Bread from Heaven.

Walking on the Water. Sinking fear meets One held by gravity from above.

A woman caught in adultery. Shame and condemnation looks grace in the eye.

"Come and see" was the invitation... and there's a man born blind who is seeing... Jesus healed him... and his physical seeing exposes the spiritual blindness of all those who are so sure they know. They're blind because they think they see.

Then Jesus is standing outside a tomb. And everyone thinks death is so final... Jesus knows it isn't. And all of us who took him up on the invitation to follow and see are witnessing new life. Lazarus comes out of the tomb... still wrapped up in the garb of death and needing his friends to help him with that. They unwrap him.

The power of God... the profound need of humankind... the capacity for people to help.

“Where do you dwell?” “Come and see.” And they do... in an upper room they see him kneeling, humbly washing dirty feet of those with egos too large and too threatened to serve one another.

And Jesus is able to do it, John says, **“Because he knew where he was from and where he was going.”** He knows in whom he dwells.

They see... They're seeing. Now they're seeing deeper and deeper... following leads further and further into God's reality. ... Into some paradoxical mystery where God has entered into the deepest kind of suffering. Jesus hurts... He loses... He dies. And from a hill they see his head bowed. It is finished. And the curtain falls again.

But there's another scene. Come and see... they don't leave this divine theatre... there's a closing scene.

The last thing to see is Jesus speaking peace into their confused and fearful hearts. And then breathing into them his very Spirit and then sending them to touch the world with grace. **“Tell them they're forgiven.”**

They see who God is... and who they now are... and that's a long way from where they were, that day when John the Baptist sent them over to see Jesus. Truth happens on the other side of following. Risk... willingness to journey, to be on the path... that comes first. Then the answers. Deep awareness, clear seeing, is the gift God gives along the way to those who are hungry enough to follow.

There's a curious little aside at the end of our gospel reading. John says, **“It was about the tenth hour.”** You might disagree with me but it's my suspicion that John isn't wasting ink and papyrus to tell us what time it was. At least not the time of day.

I think he's winking at an audience who sits up when it hears the number ten mentioned. Ten... Ten Commandments. And the word “hour” is huge for John. He uses it over twenty times and it's about the timing of what God is revealing in Jesus.

It's the tenth hour...

It's time to let go of the old way of doing life...

the old way of seeing God.

It's time to move.

It's time to follow.

Time to know.

Are you ready to do that? Hungry for that? **“Come and See”**