

“Come and See”
John 1:29-42
January 15, 2023
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On Wednesday in chapel time with our preschool students, our story was about John the Baptist and to help the children understand what John the Baptist and his ministry was all about, I asked them to imagine that we were expecting a special visitor who would be coming to see us soon. I told them to imagine that our visitor’s name was Mr. Pinklesmith, and since they hadn’t ever seen him or met him, I would tell them some things about him so that they would be able to recognize him and be ready to meet him when he came. I told them that he was a very tall man, and that he only ever wore red clothes. Then I asked, if a very tall man came walking in and he was wearing a red shirt, and red pants, and red shoes, would you know who it was? They said yes! So, forgive me for “explaining it to you like you’re 3,” but it’s a pretty good way to describe what John’s ministry was about. He was set apart to help people get ready for Jesus’s arrival, and he did this by talking about what God’s Servant would be like and what he would do so that when he arrived, people would recognize him and be ready to follow him.

In our Scripture passage from John that we’re looking at this morning, we hear about a moment when John’s Mr. Pinklesmith shows up. John looks up and sees with his own eyes the expected visitor that he had been telling people about, and he says, “that’s him! There he is!” and to confirm it, he describes how Jesus’s identity had been confirmed to him in the event that we heard about last week, when he baptized Jesus in the Jordan River. Let’s listen to the Scripture now to hear what John says and to hear also what happened when people saw Jesus and heard what John had to say about him. John 1:26-42 says,

The next day [the day after some Pharisees had come out to the wilderness to ask him who he was and what he was doing] **he saw Jesus coming towards him and declared, ‘Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’** ³⁰ **This is he of whom I said, “After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.”** ³¹ **I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.’** ³² **And John testified, ‘I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.’** ³³ **I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, “He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.”** ³⁴ **And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.’**

³⁵ **The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples,** ³⁶ **and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, ‘Look, here is the Lamb of God!’** ³⁷ **The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.** ³⁸ **When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, ‘What are you looking for?’ They said to him, ‘Rabbi’ (which translated means Teacher), ‘where are you staying?’** ³⁹ **He said to them, ‘Come and see.’ They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon.** ⁴⁰ **One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.** ⁴¹ **He first found his brother Simon and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which is translated Anointed).** ⁴² **He brought Simon^{l3} to Jesus, who looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas (which is translated Peter^l).**

In verses 26-36, we see John doing John’s job- preparing people to meet and recognize Jesus - and at verse 37, we find out that John was successful in preparing people to meet Jesus. When two of his own disciples saw him pointing to Jesus and when they heard John telling them, “he’s the one,” they went after Jesus.

Here is what we know about these two disciples. We know that one of them was Andrew because he is named. We aren't told the name of the other one, but it's possible and often presumed that the unnamed disciple was John, the brother of James, and the author of this Gospel. Even though we don't know the second person's name, what we also know about both of these disciples is that they were looking for something. They were looking for the Messiah, and we know this because they had aligned themselves with John the Baptist. They were following John and listening to his teaching because they were looking for and getting ready for God's help and salvation, and they wanted to find the promised One who would come bringing those things. When Jesus walked by on this day, they didn't know or understand everything about him yet, but they went after him because they believed John's testimony about him.

Andrew and the other disciple spent the day with Jesus in response to his invitation to them to come and see where he was staying. We can only speculate about what kinds of things they asked Jesus about and what kinds of things he explained to them, but since they were looking for the Messiah and since they had believed what John told them about Jesus it seems likely that they spent the day talking to Jesus about what his plans might be or asking questions that might help verify his identity. Whatever it was that they heard and experienced while they were in Jesus's company seemed to confirm in their minds that he was truly the One sent from God, because the first thing Andrew did after spending that time with Jesus was go find his brother. He told Peter that they had found the Messiah, and then he brought Peter to meet Jesus.

The verses that we read this morning end with Jesus giving Peter a new name which points to the significant role that Peter would end up having in the birth and growth of the church, and after this event, Peter becomes more prominent and more often mentioned than his brother Andrew in the Gospels. Even though Andrew doesn't become "great," or well-known, in the same way that Peter does, he still became part of Jesus's inner circle of disciples, and it's worth it for us to pay attention to this less talked about disciple because Andrew sets an important and powerful example for us in this passage.

It's been pointed out already that Andrew was a man who was seeking, and searching, and looking for something. He was looking for God and for the salvation, and hope, and peace, and justice that only God could deliver. He was looking for the answer to his prayers, and the assurance of God's care and presence with him and with his people. He was looking for God's intervention on their behalf, and through the ministry of John the Baptist and then through his own direct encounter with Jesus it was revealed to him that in Jesus he had found what he was looking for. When Andrew realized that he had found what he was looking for, he realized that what he found was what other people were looking for, too, so he went to find another seeker, his brother, and he brought Peter to see what he had found. Let's think about all of that for a minute.

When we became followers of Jesus, if you are already a follower of Jesus, we became believers and followers just like Andrew did. That doesn't mean we all have the same story, but whatever the particular details of the story are, faith in Jesus comes alive in our hearts through a combination of the ministry of someone who believed before we did and brought us to see Jesus and the ministry of the Holy Spirit who revealed the identity of Jesus to us. This is the process that Paul refers to in his first letter to the Corinthians in chapter 3:5-9. **⁵What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labour of each. ⁹For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building.** John the Baptist was the planter for Andrew. John testified about Jesus and then

said to Andrew, “there he is!” For you, the planter might have been parents who shared their faith with you. Or maybe it was a youth leader, or pastor, or an author who either planted or watered seeds of faith and brought you to see to Jesus. It might have been a co-worker or a friend. Whoever it was, or whoever they were, someone, somewhere along the way pointed you to Jesus and showed you in some way that in him you would find what you were looking for. It might have been freedom from shame that you were looking for, or assurance that your sins could be and are forgiven, or the chance to start again, or the truth and values to build your life on, or the path to peace with God and others, hope for broken world. Someone showed you what they had found in Jesus and with the words that they spoke to you, or the actions that they demonstrated they invited you to see and meet Jesus. You might not have gone looking for Jesus as quickly as Andrew went after Jesus when John pointed him out. It might have taken months or even years between the time someone pointed you to Jesus and the time when the Holy Spirit opened your eyes and awakened your faith in Jesus, but someone planted and watered, and the Spirit grew the seed into faith.

Andrew was quick to go after Jesus, but the other thing that we see about Andrew is that after he realized that he had found what he was looking for in Jesus, he was also quick to go look for *other* people who were looking for God’s salvation and bring them to Jesus. He knew that his brother was looking just like he had been, and he went right away to find him and he brought him to see what he had found. You might not think about it much, or maybe you do, but we are always surrounded by people who are looking for the same things that we were looking for when we met Jesus. It’s our neighbors, and the people you work with, and people that you stand next to in the check-out line at the grocery store, or people in the waiting room with you at the doctor’s office or the DMV who are looking for something that only Jesus can deliver to them. It’s easy to be consumed in our own thoughts, and schedules, and daily tasks so we might not really look around or look up and think about that too much when we see the neighbor rolling their trash can out to the curb or when we’re looking down at our phone in a waiting room full of people, but there are always people around us who are seeking, and searching, and looking for something. There are people who are dissatisfied with their lives or with what they see happening in the world around them. People are looking for a way for the world to be safer, and more just, and filled with more peace and less conflict, and more love and less hatred. They are looking for a real connection with God and with other people, and for a place to belong. People are looking for a way to begin again, and freedom from bad habits and bad circumstances, and they are looking for a source of joy, and a reason for hope. People are looking for all of this and they look for it wherever they think it might be found - in religion, and humanism, in books, and in gurus, in pleasure, and in human companions. People look anywhere and everywhere for the balm that will soothe us and the thing that will make our lives and the world around us whole again.

These friends, and acquaintances, and strangers that are part of our lives -on a regular basis, or maybe just for a few passing moments- they are the Peters – the ones who are looking for the same things that we looked for- and Jesus sends us to be Andrews for them. He calls us and sends us to tell them to show them what we have found in Jesus. He leads us to invite them to come and see Jesus for themselves – to come and see that in him we find what we are looking for and longing for most deeply. Of course, it isn’t up to us to convince anyone of anything. We don’t have to push, or force anything on anyone. We don’t have to try to prove the truth about our testimony. We may be the planters, like Paul, or the ones who water seeds that were already planted like Apollos, but it is God the Holy Spirit, who does the convincing, who gives birth to faith, and makes the seeds grow.

Today, we have heard the testimony of John the Baptist. “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!” With the help of others and help from the Spirit, we have seen for ourselves and become convinced in our own hearts that what John said is true- that Jesus did come to bring what we

need, and through the story of that lesser known disciple, Andrew, God is asking us to pay attention and to remember those around us who are looking for what we have found in and through Jesus. If your life has been changed because you have heard and believed the good news, then you have a story, and you have good news to share that someone is waiting and wanting to hear. Look for those people. Ask the Spirit to open your eyes to see them, and to see the opportunities that are there to point others to Jesus. Jesus is sending us, and to emphasize the point, let me close with the words that Paul proclaimed to the Romans in Romans 10:13-15. **“¹³ For, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ ¹⁴ But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? ¹⁵ And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’** People are looking for what we have found in Christ, and God wants to help people find Jesus through us. Amen.