

## **Sermon for January 18, 2015**

Come and see. What thoughts would be going through your mind if you were to hear these words at work, or at school, or out with friends? Would you be excited at the possibilities or maybe thankful for being included? Or maybe curious as to what you were about to see or maybe curious as to even why you were invited?

Come and see. Three words that are simple and inviting. They not only invite us to witness something, but also to be part of something.

Come and see. These three words are the heart of John's gospel; a gospel that is formed around people's encounters with Jesus. The people in John who meet Jesus are many and varied. We see Jesus encounter the disciples, political leaders like Pilate, religious leaders like Nicodemus, foreigners like the Samaritan woman at the well, a beggar like the man born blind, and many others. We see not only the many different people Jesus reaches out to, but also the many ways they and we can respond to him.

In one way or another Jesus says to all of these different people—come and see. Come and see God do a new thing. Come and see the grace of God shown to all, accessible to all and available to all. Some respond by following Jesus. Others are confused or unbelieving. Some not only follow, but also invite others to follow with them.

Today's reading is one such example. Just before this John the Baptist had announced that Jesus is the lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. So now he tells his disciples that they should follow Jesus. Many of them

do and among them is Andrew who goes and tells his brother Simon Peter. Jesus goes with them to Galilee where he meets Philip and invites him to “follow me.” Philip not only follows, but goes and tells his friend Nathanael to invite him. Even in these few verses we see different reactions to the invitation; some are eager and some are so skeptical that they’re rude! But they are all invited—some by Jesus and some by others—to come and see and eventually to follow.

Come and see. These three words form not only the heart of John’s gospel, but also the heart of Christian evangelism. We aren’t called to force our faith on anyone else or to threaten punishment if people don’t believe as we do. What we are called to do is invite—asking others to come and see what God has done and is still doing in and through Jesus and the community that is gathered here today who have chosen to follow him.

But as simple and inviting as these words are, they’re still hard to say. We just aren’t comfortable inviting others to church. And that’s a problem because from the beginning the church has grown by personal invitation—one person inviting another to come and see. What influences a person the most when it comes to going to church isn’t the size of the building or congregation or the amount of programs available or the worship times or the style of worship. The number one reason that people give for going to a church for the first time was that someone personally invited them to come.

The future of not only this church, but of all churches depends greatly on each of us ordinary, everyday Christians courageously asking others to come and see what we have found in the communities in which we worship. But to be able to do

this we need to know what we've found and how to talk about it. To help us with that I want you to take the piece of paper you were given as you came in this morning and answer two questions on it. First, what is your favorite thing about the life that we share in this faith community? And secondly, would you be willing to invite someone you know to come and see and share this aspect of our congregational life that you enjoy?

Before you begin, let us pray. Come, Holy Spirit, that we may see and taste the grace of God anew. Come, Holy Spirit, that we might share the grace of God with others. Come, Holy Spirit, that we might bear witness with our whole lives to the grace of God made manifest and available to us in Jesus Christ. Amen.