

2020 01 19 – Come and See

John 1:35-50

Last week we read the story of the Baptism of Jesus, the story of Jesus being baptized in the Jordan River by his cousin, John. We know that John was initially reluctant to baptize Jesus, but he did it anyway. It turns out that once the baptism had taken place, John couldn't stop telling people about it. His favourite part was the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove and resting on Jesus. According to John, God had told him, "When you see the Spirit descend and rest on someone, that's the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit."

John believed it was his job to tell everyone he met about Jesus. In today's reading, John is standing with two of his disciples when he sees Jesus walking by and he says to them, "Look! There's the Lamb of God!" Now John had many names for Jesus. I have to admit that "Lamb of God" is not one of my personal favourites, but I'm not going spend any time today telling you why. That topic is for another sermon or maybe two or three. Let's just say that John was explaining to his disciples that Jesus was the one he had been telling them about. Jesus was the one they were waiting for. Let's just say that John's description of Jesus intrigued them enough that those two disciples began to follow Jesus down the road.

Jesus probably felt their presence or heard their footsteps and he turned around. He asked them, "What are you looking for?" They responded with the question,

“Rabbi, where are you staying?” And Jesus answered, “Come and see.” They went and spent the rest of the day with their Rabbi, their teacher.

So why didn't Jesus just say, “I'm staying with my friend just down the road,” and leave it at that? Why the invitation to “come and see?” Was he just being polite or was it because he knew that these disciples were shy and what they really wanted was to spend some time with him? Was it because they had called him Rabbi, so he knew they were looking for a teacher? Was it because they hadn't told him what they were looking for and so he wanted to give them time to figure it out?

This scripture reading made me think about my own story and how I came back to the church when I was around 30 years old. If someone had asked me then, “What are you looking for?” I think my first answer would have been, “community.” But once I entered the doors of Bellefair United Church, once I spent some time in that congregation, I realized that I had actually been looking for much more. I had been looking for a place to connect with the sacred, a place of healing, a place to learn and to grow, and a place where I could share my gifts. No one said to me, “Come and see,” but there was a sign outside the church announcing their new clergy couple and, for me, that was enough of an invitation. Thank God I went and I stayed.

Can you think of times in your life when you have received an invitation to “come and see?” We were talking about this at bible study on Wednesday and one of the participants mentioned her granddaughter was in the process of choosing a

college or university to attend. Many of us at that age have no idea what we are really looking for. But her granddaughter had the opportunity to visit a few campuses and she came back with a sense of which place felt right. She might not have been able to articulate why, but once she went and saw, once she experienced it, she knew what she needed. She knew what she was looking for.

In today's reading we heard even more invitations. One of the two disciples who went and stayed with Jesus, was named Andrew. The first thing that Andrew did was to go and find his brother, Simon. He didn't just say, "Come and see," he actually brought Simon to Jesus. And it doesn't stop there, we also have the story of Jesus inviting Philip to follow him and then Philip going to tell his friend Nathaniel. When Nathaniel is skeptical about anything good coming from Nazareth, we hear those familiar words from Philip, "Come and see."

Could you do it? Have you done it before? How many times have you invited someone to, "Come and see?" What was the invitation for? Were you inviting them to join your service club, to check out a new restaurant in town or to attend a Bronco's game? What did you tell them in order to convince them to follow you there? My guess is that you told them what it was that you liked about being there, what it was that you received, what it was that kept you coming back

We know from today's reading that everyone's story is different and that everyone's reason for staying is different. You can tell by all the different names that the people used for Jesus. We've already mentioned "Lamb of God," and "Rabbi," but in this reading we also heard, "Messiah, the Anointed One," "the One

that Moses spoke of in the Law, the one about whom the prophets wrote: Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary and Joseph,” and finally, “God’s Own, the ruler of Israel!” They were looking for: a saviour, a teacher, a warrior, a deliver, a Nazarene, a son of God, and even a King. Everybody was looking for something different and what they found was expressed in the name that they used for Jesus.

We can never assume that we know what people are looking for. All we can tell them is what we have found. All we can tell them is the reason that we keep coming back. So here’s a question, “Why are you here? Why are you a follower of Jesus in this place? What do you like about this church and what keeps you coming back? If you are new here, what brought you through these doors?” I want you to turn to the person beside you and answer those questions. First of all find the person. Each of you will have one minute to share your story. I will time you and let you know when to switch. Remember this is not a conversation; just one person speaks at a time. And the question is: “Why are you here at First United and what keeps you coming back?” Choose who is going first. OK begin.

That is all you need to know, that’s all you need to do. Here’s your challenge for this week. Find one person who is not a member of this congregation and tell them what you just told your neighbour. When you have finished telling them why you come to First United and what keeps you coming back, invite them to “come and see.” Let them come and find out for themselves what they are looking for. Let them come and find out for themselves what it means to follow Jesus.