

Come and See
John 1:35-42
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When I entered college, I was sure what I wanted to do. I wanted to be a doctor. Why? Was it because I was fascinated by the human body and modern medicine? Did I hold an altruistic ideal that I could cure people and make their lives better? Was it because I had the handwriting for it? Yes to that last one, but no. I wanted to be a doctor to make lots of money. That's how 18-year-old Kory thought.

One of my first classes was Chemistry 101. It was taught by a guy who was about 100 years old and is probably still teaching today. It was a large class and my uncle was actually in there with me. That was great, because it meant we could study together. Unfortunately, studying together turned into five minutes of classwork and two hours of video games. I did not do well in Chemistry 101.

So, I went to see my academic advisor and told her I wanted to change my major from pre-med. She said, "To what?" I said, "To anything that doesn't require math or science." She thought a minute and said, "Have you thought about communications?" I said no, but I like to talk. A lot. She said, "That will be perfect for you." So, without ever having taken a communications class or talking to a communications professor, I changed my major to communications.

That may not be the biggest leap of faith in my life, but it's one of the most memorable. We've all had moments when we've had to make a decision or take a stand on something that we weren't really sure about. We had no guarantee of an outcome and no promise that everything was going to work out all right. And yet, we went ahead and bought the house or changed jobs or make some other life-altering decision.

That's where the disciples are in today's passage. They're hanging around when their buddy John says, "Hey, there goes the guy I've been telling you about!" so they start following him. The man, whom John called the Lamb of God, turns to them and says, "What are you looking for?" They respond, "Where are you staying?" and Jesus said, "Come and see."

"What are you looking for?" That's kind of a funny start to a conversation, when you think about it. Jesus apparently doesn't like small talk. No chit-chat about the weather or the fishing conditions. And even the wording of the question is odd. It would seem more logical for Jesus to ask, "What do you want?" or "Why are you following me?" Jesus' question cuts deeper than that. It implies a longing, a searching, a yearning for something. After all, the word "question" contains the word "quest," a search for something meaningful.

"Come and see." And amazingly, the disciples go! Realize at this point in the story, those men probably didn't have any idea who Jesus really was. He hadn't worked any miracles or delivered any sermons. And these men had other responsibilities to think about. They had families, they had jobs. They had 100 different reasons not to drop everything and follow this wandering prophet. And yet they go. They take a leap of faith and cancel their plans for the day so they can follow Jesus. One of those men, Andrew, meets Jesus and calls him Rabbi, but after a few hours with him, Andrew tells his brother Simon not about Jesus the Rabbi but Jesus the Messiah, the anointed one of God. Just as Andrew gives Jesus a name change, so Jesus does the same with Simon. Jesus says, "You are Simon, but you will be called Cephas," which translates in Greek as "Peter," or "the rock," like the word "petrified."

“Come and see.” I’m not sure about you, but I don’t know that I would have responded the way they did. I might have been curious about what Jesus had to say, but I would probably want to ease into the situation a bit more slowly. Maybe I could put my name on a sign-up sheet for potential disciples or attend a potluck presentation on the Kingdom of God. Maybe I could find an article on the internet called, “Twelve reasons to follow a wandering prophet – you won’t believe #7!” Maybe if I waited a bit longer Jesus would offer a less rigorous category of auxiliary membership with which I could get the same rewards with such a radical commitment. But something tells me Jesus isn’t looking for just auxiliary members.

I wonder if the disciples responded positively to the invitation to “Come and see” because of the question Jesus asked first. “What are you looking for?” Jesus asked them. “What are you looking for?” Jesus asks us. I’m not talking about when we’re browsing on Amazon or shopping at the grocery store or standing in front of the fridge late at night. It seems there are many times in our lives when we’re looking, but we’re not really sure what we’re looking for.

Is that how it feels on Sunday morning? When you come through those doors on Sunday morning, when you come into Jesus’ presence, what are you looking for? I’ll share with you my secret fear. It’s that you aren’t looking for anything. I hope I’m wrong, but I worry about that. I worry that some folks come to church with no intentionality, no expectation. They come because...well, that’s what you’re supposed to do. But if come looking for nothing, I’m afraid that’s what you’ll find.

I wonder how our experience of worship would be different if we came looking for something. I wonder how it would be different if we came with the expectation that we were going to meet Jesus here – in the lyrics of a hymn, in the handshake of a stranger, in the breaking of the bread. I wonder how it would be different if we came here to worship, not just to sit in a pew, if we came with a quest, a longing, a searching, a yearning to know something.

“What are you looking for?” Jesus asks the two men. I believe they were looking for much more than a place to sleep or a quick cup of coffee with Jesus. I believe what the two disciples were truly looking for was themselves. They were looking for a new understanding of who they were apart from the way their society defined them – lower class, blue-collar, manual laborers, riff-raff. They wanted to be known for who they truly were, not for their jobs or their family history or their mistakes. They were longing, searching, yearning to be known.

Jesus offers us that gift. Jesus has the ability to look at us and know us, not just for who we are, but for who we were created to be. Jesus looks at Simon and says, “You will be called a rock.” Peter probably thought, “Me? A rock? Does this guy really know me?” One day Jesus looked at me and said, “You are Kory, but you will be called pastor.” And I thought, “Me? A pastor? Does this guy really know me?” Jesus knows you, not just for who you are, but for who you were created to be.

Jesus offers us the same invitation to “Come and see.” When we come into this place, we are invited to sit, to stay, to remain. But we are not invited to stay the same. Through this gathering, through this worship, through these songs and rituals and practices, we are invited into something bigger, something deeper, something that can transform from who we were when we walked in to nothing less than the people of God.

That’s the beautiful irony of this question Jesus asks. What are we looking for? We’re looking for ourselves, and when we come here to find that, we end up finding Jesus, instead. And in the process of finding Jesus, we find ourselves. But it’s not ourselves as we see us, but as Jesus sees us. You know those carnival mirrors? When you stand in front of them, they make you look a lot skinnier or taller, they distort your true image? That’s what Jesus does for us.

When we see ourselves through Jesus, we're not skinnier or taller. We're holier. We're more divine. We reflect the image of God.

I think that's what we're looking for. We are looking for the true version of ourselves, refracted through the lens of God's vision of us. We're looking for a place where we can be known, where we can remain, where we can receive some understanding – no matter how small – of who we are. We're looking for a community that welcomes us, that accepts us, that knows us and yet still loves us. We're not perfect here at Crestwood, but we strive to be a place where people can find what they are looking for.

“What are you looking for?” I invite you to ponder that question the next time you come to church. Are you looking for community? It's here. Are you looking for inspiration? It's here. Are you looking for forgiveness or a new start? It's here. All that is here because Christ is here, beckoning us to come and see, becoming known to us in the breaking of the bread. I urge you to come here looking for something, because if you come looking for nothing, that's exactly what you'll find. Jesus invited the two disciples to come and see. Come and see who he was. Come and see who they could be. Jesus extends the same invitation to us. Come and see that your questions are welcomed here, because a lot of other people probably have those same questions. Come and see that you are a child of God, loved just as you are, and called to be more than you are. Come and see that Jesus is the answer to the questions you bring with you. Come and see.