

Sermon for Sunday
January 14, 2018
John 1:43-51

Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our heart be acceptable to you O God, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

If your childhood was anything like mine you probably heard the invitation to “come and see” on more than one occasion. It might not have been exactly those words but something similar. In my memory the invitation to ‘come and see’ was often the beginning of an adventure and sometimes the start of getting into some trouble.

On one occasion the invitation to “come and see” was an invitation to see my friend’s new bicycle. An odd looking thing that her father had cobbled together from a variety of miscellaneous “bike like” parts found around the farm. The wheel on the front was bigger than the one on the back but somehow her father had managed to balance the whole thing through some creative welding. It was blue and green and red rust in colour and had a banana seat – to stop the bike - you pushed the pedals backward. My friend and I spent the next few weeks trying to figure out how to ride the thing - One of us pedaling and the other yelling instructions from the curb. Our Mom’s just kept the bandages and Iodine on the kitchen table – handy.

On another occasion the invitation to “come and see” - issued by another friend had us sneaking away to her basement so she could show me the key to her parent’s liquor cabinet.///

“Come and see” is a hard invitation to pass up because it is at the same time - part request and part dare. The invitation appeals to our sense of curiosity and our sense of adventure. In addition accepting an invitation to come and see often quenches our thirst for belonging – for we get to be part of a group - to share inside knowledge, to share in an experience only a special few others get to experience. It’s very appealing this “come and see” invitation.

I wonder if this invitation to “come and see” might have been issued to you in those early days of your faith journey. For many of us our first steps into the church and our first experiences of worship came as an invitation to “come and see” issued by family or friends. “Come and see” what it is we do here on Sunday morning.

It is a pretty compelling invitation it touches something deep within us. Perhaps the church continues to this day because of our curiosity to come and see – see what God is doing.

Maybe there was something in you this morning that called you here: a desire to “come and see” - to come and see what might happen. Perhaps you were inspired by a healthy bit of curiosity to come - to know more and to be part of something special.

It certainly hooked Nathaniel.

Consider the story we find in the Gospel of John. It starts with Phillip joining a small group of people that Jesus had basically shouted at as he walked by. Hey you, Jesus called - follow me - and remarkably they do - they drop what they are doing and they go with Jesus. Then you have Phillip talking to Nathaniel – “hey Nathaniel we have found that guy that Moses and the prophets were talking about - the one who is to save us all. He is this guy named Jesus – he is the son of Joseph and he is from Nazareth.”

The story tells us that Nathaniel is intrigued by what Phillip tells him but sceptical - his response is honest perhaps – revealing - he has been to Nazareth and I guess he was not impressed. So he expresses his doubt to Phillip.

Phillip's simple responses to Nathaniel's scepticism is; "Come and see" and Nathaniel does - he goes – he follows his sense of adventure and curiosity and he goes and he meets Jesus.

But what happens in this coming and seeing Jesus - is something more – it's about "coming to be seen". For Nathaniel and the rest of them it is about "being seen" for who they really are. It is about coming, as John describes, to have the true light of the world shine on them and into every dark hidden place within them. And this light shines in all places even those places they would not want someone to see. Those place of brokenness, pain and insecurity, of failure and sin.

Our story tells us that Nathaniel has been seen even before he has had the opportunity to meet Jesus. Jesus tells him who he is before he even opens his mouth and Nathaniel is shocked. How do you know me Nathaniel asks?

Jesus has seen beyond Nathaniel's understanding. Jesus knows all of Nathaniel's shortcomings and his failures and also Jesus knows that at his core Nathaniel is a child of God, made in God's image.

Jesus embraces Nathaniel and Nathaniel follows – he follows Jesus because he has been truly seen.

My hunch is that many of us who have "come to see" here – who have come to this church – find our truest selves are embraced here. We have come face to face with the grace of God and God's love for us **here**. We have found acceptance in this place regardless of our bumps and bruises, our shortcomings and our quirks. We too have been seen.

I admire the bravery of those amongst us who are grieving – I know some folks have expressed some worry that if they come to church something might catch their grief and they might start crying. I have told such folks that church is the perfect place to let the grief show. I have assured them that they will be seen with love – Just I have been seen in by brokenness and been not judgement.

Within these walls and within this community of saints and sinners we have found a place where we have been seen and loved all the same. We have found here acceptance and we have been welcomed. Like Nathaniel God has seen us and loved us anyway.

God calls us to "come and see" and to be seen.

And having been called to come and see and been seen it is now our job to invite others. We are to be the ones who invite others to "come and see" we are to be the ones who invite others to be seen and we are to be God's grace embodied - so that they too might know the love of God who knows them and calls by name.

Come and see all that God is doing. Come and see and know you are God's beloved.

Then go and tell the others.

Amen.

John 1:43-51

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." ⁴⁷When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" ⁴⁸Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." ⁴⁹Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" ⁵⁰Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." ⁵¹And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."