

"Come and See"  
 January 15, 2017  
 Second Sunday after Epiphany  
 Text: John 1:29-42

Island Height UMC, Island Heights, NJ

*The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel."*

*And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 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.' And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God."*

*The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.*

*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?"*

*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.*

*One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed).*

*He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).*

#### Introduction

*I have climbed the highest mountains  
 I have run through the fields  
 Only to be with you  
 Only to be with you*

*I have run, I have crawled*

*I have scaled these city walls  
These city walls  
Only to be with you*

*But I still haven't found what I'm looking for.  
But I still haven't found what I'm looking for.*

These are the lyrics of a U2 song that haunt us because they ring true for so many who find ourselves on a life-long quest for something deeper than what appears in this world. It's a cry from the heart. It's a yearning for something more. And that's the journey we're on. And we keep on searching until we find what we are looking for.

### The Witness of John

There are people who are searching in today's gospel reading, a passage which includes the familiar character John the Baptist. We have heard so much about John all the way through Advent and even at Christmas. And in today's reading we hear what the gospel writer John (a different John) has to say about him. He tells the story that as *...John sees Jesus coming toward him he declares, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel."*

*"I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove," John says, "and it remained on him. 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.' And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God."*

John is a witness. He has seen something that has changed his life. And John is telling this to his disciples. Yes, John has disciples. Why? They, like us, are on a spiritual quest. Until they find what they are looking for, they, just like us, will continue to look. And when John appears in the wilderness and begins preaching repentance and baptizing people in the Jordan River, they believe John is from God and so they stay with him. Maybe he is what they have been looking for.

### The Turning Point

But then comes the turning point. John was just the beginning. Things begin to shift away from John the Baptist.

*The next day John again is standing with two of his disciples, and as he watches Jesus walk by, he exclaims, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!"*

*The two disciples hear him say this, and they follow Jesus.*

As John always does, he points toward Jesus. It's never about John, and he is the first to say it, even to his own disciples. *"I am not worthy,"* John would say, *"to untie or hold his sandals."*

This time the disciples listen, and they cannot resist; and the decision is made. They are on a quest, and if John the Baptist is not the one, they will follow the one

called Jesus, because they still haven't found what they are looking for. So, they follow Jesus.

To be a follower of Jesus. What might that mean? Many may say they are followers of Jesus. In surveys many may report they are Christians. But what does it mean to really follow Jesus?

Because eventually comes the moment of truth. The day comes when we stop playing at being Christian and face the reckoning of what it really means. The moment arrives when Jesus turns to you as he did on the road that day with those two disciples. John writes:

*When Jesus turns and sees them following, he says to them, "What are you looking for?"*

And that's really the turning point. Now if Jesus were to say to you, "*What are you looking for?*" how would you respond?

### Come and See

When the disciples hear this question they say to him, "*Rabbi*" (which translated means *Teacher*), "*where are you staying?*"

*He says to them, "Come and see." They come and see where he is staying, and they remain with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.*

They spend the day with him. They get to know each other. They probably share some meals together. They spend quality time with the Rabbi and they learn.

And it all begins with Jesus saying to them, "Come and see," That's the invitation. This is how it works. One day God shows up and says, "Come and see." Here's the thing you should know: that even while we are on our journey, our search, our quest for the deeper thing in life, that very thing, that one thing we are looking for, that one person, is already out there looking for us.

So, when he finds you and says, "Come and see," will you follow him to wherever he leads?

### You Must Meet Him!

Why does this matter, and what happens next? The gospel tells us, *One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.*

And now Andrew has the good news. Andrew the evangelist: *He finds his brother Simon and says to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed).*

*He brings Simon to Jesus, who looks at him and says, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter)—which means rock.*

Peter. The Rock. Called with a new name, the changes have begun. Consider the action that Andrew takes. Maybe there was an Andrew in your life. Perhaps you are an Andrew to someone else. Either way, God is being revealed in Jesus Christ and the invitation to "come and see" continues to be voiced.

## The Journey Continues

But the journey continues. Can you still hear Bono's voice:

*I believe in the Kingdom Come  
Then all the colors will bleed into one  
Bleed into one  
But yes, I'm still running*

*You broke the bonds  
And you loosed the chains  
Carried the cross of my shame  
Of my shame, you know I believe it*

*But I still haven't found  
What I'm looking for*

The quest continues. The yearning still grabs us. This was never going to be easy. The answers were never going to be black and white. Even after an encounter with Jesus the mystery of God continues as our life in the Spirit goes deeper all the time. Challenges continue, heart-aches are likely to occur along the way, and yet we still believe. We maintain the hope that was placed in us long ago. Baptism, such as the one we celebrate today, is the beginning. It's the first calling by name of someone into the body of Christ. It's the start of the journey. We have been called by name and we follow. And that yearning in us for something more keeps us moving forward.

It begins at baptism and leads to the cross. When the disciples asked Jesus, "Where are you staying?" his response was an invitation. He said, "Come and see." They went that day and saw. All through his ministry of teaching and healing they went and saw. Even the day he was crucified they went and saw. But then came the day when believing they were going to the place he was staying, they found an empty tomb. Then there is the shift. And then the call to others to "Come and see" becomes their own. So, today,

Hear the voice that asks "What are you looking for?"  
Accept the invitation to "Come and see."  
Know that God is forever being revealed in Jesus Christ, and  
Take that good news to a hurting world.

Amen.