

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

East Moline, Illinois

Pastor Becky Sherwood

January 19, 2020, The 2nd Sunday After Epiphany

Psalm 40: 1-11, John 1:29-42

COME AND SEE

Have you ever sat in a stadium, or a conference room, or an arena and waited with that barely suppressed excitement to see the person you've come to see?

Have you ever waited for one of your heroes, or one of your favorite bands, your favorite professional team or athlete, or favorite author to come out on stage, or out onto the court or the playing field?

Have you ever had that experience of leaping to your feet the minute you see them?

In June of 1990 in Detroit Nelson Mandela of South Africa was on his Freedom Tour around the United States and the world, after being released from prison. Before he arrived on stage in Tiger Stadium, Rosa Parks, who was then in her late 70's, came up on stage, and we were all immediately on our feet.

Then Nelson & Winnie Mandela's limo drove onto the field and 10's of thousands of us rose to our feet and cheered with one voice, tears pouring down our faces.

It's hard to find words for what it feels like to see a band whose music is part of you, or a team you've only seen on TV, or one of your heroes come into the same room with you, or the same arena or stadium where you are.

Sometimes these are people we've followed for years;
we've read about them, watched them, listened to their videos or podcasts,
and then there we are,
and there they are and we are in the same place!

It's an amazing adrenalin rush, sometimes it almost doesn't feel real,
and we sometimes feel like our life is being changed in some intangible way by
the experience.

The disciples of John the Baptist had heard of Jesus of Nazareth and his ministry. They heard John's claim that he was the Son of God, the Messiah, "who takes away the sin of the world."

It was in their DNA as Jewish men in Galilee, as Jewish men in Israel, to have longed for the Messiah along with their people, through thousands of years.

These men knew about anticipation and waiting to see someone they'd been longing to see.
(Jn 1:29)

I'm sure they waited for the Messiah with a depth of anticipation that far surpasses that night in Tiger Stadium when Nelson Mandela was traveling to us from the airport.

My experience that night gives me just a glimpse of what that day must have been like for them.

It helps me understand how the disciples could leave their fishing nets, their businesses, and their families and follow Jesus.

At a word from Nelson Mandela we would have followed.

For that matter Rosa Parks could have had the same effect on us.

They were larger than life and we were in their presence.

It gave them power.

But those men who had followed John the Baptist weren't just drawn to follow a famous person whom everyone was talking about, they were drawn to follow the promised Messiah who was God's Son.

They were called to follow the One their nation had longed for through the centuries. Can you imagine what they were feeling when John said to them: "God told me to watch for the coming of God's Spirit. God told me that the Spirit would come down and rest on God's chosen One.

I saw the Spirit come down from heaven like a dove and remain on Jesus."

John said: "I saw this happen with my own eyes and I know that this is the Son of God."

Hearing this the two men are on their feet, and they are following after Jesus as he is going down the road.

Jesus turns to them and asks: "*What are you looking for?*"

One of the men answers: "Where are you staying?"

And Jesus says, "*Come and see.*"

The men want to know where Jesus is staying so they can find him again. Instead of giving them an address Jesus says, "Come and see where I'm staying."

"Come and see who I am.

Come and see the journey I'm calling you to.

Come and see who you are meant to be."

Jesus invites the two men to come into a relationship with him:

He doesn't hand them a brochure called "The Top 10 Things to Know About Jesus of Nazareth,"

he doesn't lecture them,

he doesn't say go home and read about me in the Bible.

He says, "come and see,

come and experience who I am,

come and know me by being a part of my life."

So, they came to see where Jesus was staying and who he was. John says that one of these disciples was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. Having seen and been with Jesus, the first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon Peter and tell him, "We have found the Messiah.' And he brought him to Jesus." (John 1:41-42)

In this story we have the story of each of our faith journeys. As we turn to follow Jesus, he says to us: "What are you looking for?"

I believe this is a question that Jesus asks us over and over again. At different ages and in different life experiences our answers may be different.

"What are you looking for?"

How do we answer this question at 13 or 14, or when we're in Confirmation Classes?

How do we answer this question when we are newlyweds, or starting our first job out of college or high school,

or we've been married for 25 years and the nest is now empty?

"What are you looking for?"

How do we answer this when our loved one has just died,

or we have a new medical diagnosis,

or life is so busy we feel like we never have time for ourselves.

What are you looking for?

There is an amazing gift in this question that Jesus asks each of us.

Jesus really wants to know what we are looking for.

And the gift of this morning is that in this time and place we are invited to let Jesus ask us the question again:

“What are you looking for?”

Our answers to this question will vary, during different times and seasons in our life and our faith.

Jesus says to you this morning: “*What are you looking for?*”

How do you answer in this time in your life? Do you hear yourself answering?:

I’m looking for peace.

I’m looking for comfort.

I am looking for answers.

I’m looking for ways to follow you better, Jesus.

I’m looking for faith again, it’s too hard to believe right now.

I’m looking for truth.

I’m looking for compassion.

I’m looking for an end to the pain.

I’m looking for an end to the sadness.

I’m looking for hope from you, Jesus.

I’m looking for God’s love.

I’m looking for a way to understand who I am and what I’ve done.

I’m looking for a place to just sit with you Jesus.

I’m looking for.... well actually I don’t know what I’m looking for, but I know I need something different in my life.

What are you looking for?

How will answer this today?

When we name what we are looking for, Jesus’ answer to us is the same answer he gave to Andrew and the other disciple: “*Come and see.*”

Jesus says to us:

“come and experience who I am now, in this time and season of your life,

come and know me, by spending time with me,

come and see how much I love you,

come and see that you are a beloved child of God,

come and see that I am Comforter, Strength, Solace, Compassion, Guide and Friend.

Come and see.

But the story didn’t stop with the disciples coming with Jesus to see where he was staying. As one author has put it: “The story of the two new disciples is incomplete until their witness brings others to Jesus.” (NIB: Vol. X, p. 531) Once we’ve come to see Jesus, we are invited to ask others to join us.

We gather together in this sanctuary on Sunday morning because each of us in our own way, has followed Jesus to come and see who he is.

If our story stops here on Sunday morning then our journey of faith is incomplete.

If we are not telling others about our faith, or inviting them to church to “come and see,” we are missing a crucial step in the life of faith.

I’m not sending you out to the street corners to evangelize and hand out brochures.

I’m not saying, “It’s time to ring some doorbells for Jesus.”

I’m not a big fan of going up to people and asking: “Have you been saved?”

Unless that feels like a calling, but many of us are Presbyterians, and this isn’t our first comfort level!

I am saying: who have you told?

Who knows that you make time to be here on Sunday mornings, and why?

Who among your family and friends needs to be sitting here with you next Sunday?

Who longs to hear Good News in the midst of all their life is holding?

Who here in this sanctuary needs to be a part of your journey,

who in this sanctuary needs a spiritual friend and you are being nudged to step in?

Who among your friends and family is lost, and needs to know that God loves them?

Who is grieving and needs a place to gather with God’s people?

To paraphrase the previous author’s quote: “The story of each of us following Jesus is incomplete, until our telling the story and invitation brings others to Jesus.”

Or as my friend Victor, a Presbyterian pastor in Ghana says: “You may be the only Bible someone ever reads.”

The question for each of us is this:

How will we continue the story of our own discipleship, and following after Jesus Christ?

Jesus has given us the words of invitation to use: “Come and see.”

Let this be the sentence we carry from this time of worship,
and let us use it in the coming week:

“Come and see!”