

## **“Come and See”**

Liturgical Date: Epiphany 2 (A)

Primary Text: St. John 1:29-42

Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. The primary text for today, the Second Sunday of Epiphany, is the Gospel Lesson from St. John 1. In verses 29 and 36 John the Baptist calls out to all within earshot, “Behold the Lamb of God.” All are to see, view with their own eyes the one that will take away the sin of the world. Jesus also issues a call in verse 39 that is an invitation to come to see where He is dwelling and abide with Him. Thus the title of the sermon is “Come and See”.

Come and see. In our text (v37-39), two of John the Baptist’s disciples, Andrew and most likely the author of the Gospel, the Evangelist St. John, begin to follow Jesus. Jesus turns and sees them and asks them a question asking what they seek-essentially, “Why are you following me. What do you want?” They called him “Rabbi”, acknowledging that Jesus was a master teacher and ask, “where dwellest thou?” They wanted to follow Jesus home, but perhaps were not quite bold enough to just run up to Him and ask. But now that Jesus has asked them what they wanted, they make their request known. Jesus responds with a simple three word answer, “Come and see.” Jesus makes no pre-conditions, they are invited to come with Him “just as they are.” And they do. They stay with Jesus the whole day. When we see something, or someone, it can have a powerful impact.

Come and see. Tomorrow is the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday. He worked tirelessly for a more equitable society, one that was not segregated by race. A society where discriminating laws against people simply because of a darker pigment of skin would be removed. And as a Baptist minister, he effected great change while advocating doing it through peaceful means. And if you are at all familiar with the history of the Civil Rights Movement you know changes happened fairly quickly. Think of the point in 1954 when *Brown v. Board of Education* said segregated schools were unconstitutional to what had happened by the time of Rev. Dr. King's assassination in 1968. There was still progress to made, but major laws and court rulings had spurred a transformation.

How was this able to happen so quickly? Well, historians often point to the impact of television. The average American family purchased their first TV set in the 1950s and by the 60s viewing images on TV was common. When people watched the news they saw reports of peaceful protests such as marches, sit-ins and children simply trying to attend school. But the peaceful protesters were often met with violence: arrest, water cannons, bombings and killing, dogs released even on children. Because of what they saw many people modified their views and began to support changes. This was influenced greatly by what they had seen, as the injustices became harder and harder to defend. Martin Luther King and the peaceful wing of the Civil Rights movement had essentially invited people to "Come and see."

Come and see. This is what John the Baptist proclaimed as Jesus began His public ministry with His Baptism. Verse 29 told us that John saw Jesus coming and said, "*Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away*

*the sin of the world*”-words which form the basis of the *Angus Dei* that we sing as we prepare to receive the Lord’s Supper. Behold-see right before your eyes: this is the one. The one who was before even John, because He is eternal. The one whom the Spirit had descended upon. The one who is the Son of God. The one who will take away the sin of the world as the very Lamb of God. All of these things John clearly and boldly speaks in our text. Behold, see, this is the one that will make eternal life with God possible through the forgiveness of sins.

Come and See. Today is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. While our speaking up for life is not confined to one Sunday per year, the Sunday closest to the Supreme Court decision of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 is observed by many churches and denominations, including our LCMS, as Life Sunday. While it is not exclusively about abortion, we do speak clearly that the death of almost now 61 million unborn children since this decision is wrong, a tragedy, and an affront to God who values life. There is certainly a Law aspect to this in that we call it what it is-sin-and that we peacefully advocate to end this practice. But how to do change hearts and minds? How do we get people who would say that the baby in the womb is only a fetus and not really human to reconsider?

One powerful way is by coming and seeing. Lutherans for Life has a project called “Owens Mission” which brings life-like models of what a child looks like at various stages of development in the womb to Lutheran schools and other events. People have a chance to not only see, but hold these models. If you ever get to participate in something like this, I promise you it is a powerful thing. I was able to hold these figures one time and they even feel like real-you had to put baby

powder on your hands before even holding them. My heart was moved, reinforcing what I already knew that even though very small the child in the womb is a real life, just as valuable to God as mine or any other.

Come and see. What of women that have an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy? They are experiencing real challenges. Often times they get little support from the father of the child. How will I afford taking care of this child? How will I work? How will I pursue my goals? Many wonderful ministries have begun in recent decades to help women in crisis pregnancies. Not only in telling them that abortion is wrong, but providing resources to help them during their pregnancy and with the things they will need after the baby is born. Ultrasound technology is incredibly advanced today. When you look at a picture taken in the womb it becomes clear, even in the earliest weeks, that this is a baby-not a blob of tissue. They take and show, free of charge, ultrasound pictures of their baby to women considering abortion. The women very often choose life-they have been invited to and have come and seen. The best of these ministries also share the Gospel with expectant mothers.

Come and see. What did Andrew do when he took Jesus up on His invitation to “come and see”? In verse 41 it says He went and found his brother, Simon Peter saying to him, “*We have found the Messiah.*” He brought him to Jesus. And we know the rest of the story in that Andrew and Peter would become part of the core group of 12 Disciples. Peter would even become their leader. And if you were to read on in Chapter 1 you see that Philip follows Jesus. In verse 46 he finds a skeptical Nathaniel, and says guess what to him?, “Come and see.”

Come and see. A call to “come and see” that despite a different skin color people are people and deserve equal protection under the law. A call to “come and see” that despite being small, what is developing in the womb is a human being that should be protected. A call that despite being sinners, Jesus has provided the way for forgiveness. All of these things involve people coming, seeing, and experiencing. And for this to happen, the invitation must be extended. There must be speaking. Looking through our Gospel text for today I counted at least a dozen times where a form of saying or speaking was used.

A popular saying today that is attributed to St. Francis of Assisi (although there is not good evidence that he actually said it) is, *“Preach the Gospel at all times, use words if necessary.”* My brothers and sisters, this is not enough. Yes, we should live lives that are Christ-like: moral, upright, not hypocritical. However, the fact is that the Gospel cannot be preached without using words. One could look at someone who professes to be a Christian and say, “they seem like a good person, they are always helping people and being kind” but still remain lost. The power is in the Word. The power is in the Name of Jesus. The Holy Spirit delivers forgiveness and saving faith by the Word. We must speak. That is what we heard in our text. John the Baptist proclaimed verbally that Jesus is the Son, the Lamb, that takes away the sin of the world. Jesus turned and spoke to Andrew and the other disciple that were following Him, telling them to come and see. Andrew spoke to His brother Simon in inviting him to see Jesus.

But what do I say, you might ask? I don't think I can articulate the Gospel well enough. Maybe that is an excuse because if you are a Christian you should know the basic outline of the Gospel. The church has offered evangelism training on "how to do it" and more can be given. But can you say, "come and see"? I believe that you can. At a bare minimum an invitation can be extended to someone to read a Bible or tract. An invitation can be extended for them to visit with us here at Christ the King where they will hear hymns, liturgy, Bible readings, and sermons that proclaims God's message of salvation. Pray for the wisdom and strength to be an effective witness. Get trained, but right now I know everyone can say, "come and see". Come and see Jesus.

But what if we do that and someone says, "I have to get cleaned up first. The church might be struck by lightning if I show up"? What if we are tempted to think that we are somehow too bad to receive God's grace? Well, I don't read in our Gospel text John the Baptist saying to "Behold" but only if you have read Bible enough. I don't read Jesus telling Andrew that he is too much of a sinner to follow Him to His house. I don't read Andrew telling Simon that "you have got to see this Jesus that I met, but first you have pass a basic theology test."

Just as we sang earlier we come, "Just as I Am, without One Plea." And we invite others to come and see in the same way. Because when we "come and see" and the Holy Spirit works we don't stay as we are. *"Just as I am without one plea But that Thy blood was shed for me And that Thou bids't me come to Thee; Just as I am, Thou wilt receive, Wilt thou welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve; Because Thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come, I come."* Repentance and faith are the very work of

God. We cannot choose to be saved. The only “choice” in terms of salvation would be for one to stubbornly and foolishly refuse God’s grace, to refuse His gracious invitation of forgiveness and eternal life.

So come and see.

Come, see, hear, and abide with the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

Yes indeed, Come and see.

Amen.