

COME AND SEE

John 1:35-51

Key Verse: 1:39a

“Come,” he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour.”

How many of you have seen the movie trailer for “Source Code?” The reason I ask is because in it you can see many shots of the IIT campus. But the problem with trailers is that they show only the good scenes and sometimes that’s not many. And then when you go to see the movie it turns out to be a dud. Now I’m not saying that Source Code is bad but often, movies don’t live up to their trailers. However the trailer has done its job because they are designed to get you to come and see the movie. They don’t care if the movie’s good or bad, they just want to get you to come and see. Then it’s up to you to decide if the movie is good or bad. In today’s passage five men are asked, basically, to come and see Jesus. And what they discover changes their lives completely. Let’s pray that God may send us the Holy Spirit to open our hearts as we look into God’s word for ourselves. May we find what we are looking for.

Take a look at verse 35-37. “The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. 36 When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God! When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.” John, who’s mentioned here, is the prophet “John the Baptist.” Up to this point, he had been baptizing people and preaching, “Repent for the kingdom of God is near.” Then one day the identity of Jesus as the Messiah was revealed him just as he is about to baptize Jesus. (Mt 3:13-17) From that point on, John begins to declare that Jesus is the One all Israel has been waiting for. The long awaited Messiah had come into the world. And as our passage opens we find John talking with two of his disciples and as Jesus passes by John declares, “Look the Lamb of God.” John’s testimony that Jesus was the “Lamb of God,” meant that Jesus was the Messiah and as such He would become the sacrificial Lamb that would take away the sin of the world. John testifies, “I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.” (v34) John’s testimony was so convincing that when the two disciples with him heard it, they left him and started following Jesus. And that’s what he wanted. In a sense, John’s testimony was a nudge for his disciples to go to Jesus. Just like a mother bird pushes her chicks out of the nest so that they can learn to fly, John’s disciples had been nurtured by John but now it was time for them to fly, to take the next step in their life of faith. So they accepted his testimony about Jesus and with simple faith they decided to follow Jesus.

Take a look at verse 38. “Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?” They said, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” These disciples leave John’s side and set out after Jesus. As they begin to draw near to Him, Jesus turns around, and asks, “What do you want?” Jesus doesn’t ask them, “*Who* do you want?” but “*what* do you want?” This is not an unfriendly question, intended to put them off. Rather this is one of the most important questions that can ever be asked of us. This question is designed to encourage the disciples to verbalize what they wanted from Jesus and to crystallize just why they were there. When Jesus asked them, “what do you want?” he was looking at the motive of their hearts. To Jesus, this was everything because many people came to Jesus for all kinds of reasons. Some came to investigate Him while others came to be healed from their diseases. Some came to see a miracle, while others came to solve their future insecurity problems. Some came to be freed from demons while others came to condemn Him. Throughout his ministry, Jesus ministered to all kinds of needy people, but most of them never became His disciples. When they got what they wanted, they left. Jesus is laying out this question for us today, “What do you want?” We have to ask ourselves this question and answer it honestly. What’s our motive in following Jesus? This question is important because it determines the outcome. We’ll come back to this later, so I will let you think about it for awhile.

How did the disciples answer? “They said, ‘Rabbi’ (which means Teacher), ‘where are you staying?’” (v38b) At first it doesn’t look like they answered Jesus’ question. But if you understand their culture, you realize they did answer His question in a very direct way. They called Jesus “Rabbi,” which shows that they had fully accepted John’s testimony and wanted Jesus to be their teacher. Back in their time, if you wanted to study under a teacher, they would live with their teacher. For example the students of Socrates lived with him and followed him around so that they would learn everything they could from him. Likewise here, when the disciples asked, “where are you staying?” it meant, we want to be your disciples. They virtually invited themselves in. Their actions reveal that they really wanted to get to know Jesus better. They wanted to establish a personal relationship with Him. It began with John’s testimony and now they wanted to see for themselves. From them we learn the right motive in following Jesus: it’s to know Christ better. This is true for new disciples, but it’s equally important to seasoned servants of God as well. Apostle Paul was a good example, after his conversion he served Jesus with *all his heart* and yet at the *end* of his life he said, “I want to know Christ.” (Php 3:10) True disciples of Jesus have a craving to know Jesus deeper and deeper. It’s not a burden. When we really like something, we love to spend time with it. When I was younger, I loved to play my guitar for hours on end and before I knew it, the time flew by. When we want to know Christ Bible study take on a whole new dimension. It comes alive and becomes like a personal conversation with Jesus. Through the help of the Holy Spirit, we can bring the deepest questions of our hearts to Jesus and He gives us answers. On the other hand, if we don’t want to know Christ, Bible study is a burden and we get nothing out of it, or worse we may end up like a Pharisee.

Jesus’ answer was encouraging: “Come, and you will see.” (v39) Jesus invited them to come and be with him. That day, Jesus shared his life with them. He wasn’t too busy, where they had to make an appointment. He didn’t have prerequisites for them to fulfill. They didn’t have to be someone important to get His attention. Jesus really wanted to connect with them. Just as the disciples were seeking the Messiah, the Messiah was seeking disciples. The great thing about Jesus, is that He invites everyone who want to know him. He says, “Here I am. I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.” (Revelation 3:20) Jesus is at the door of our hearts knocking, even now. If we just open our hearts he will come in. Jesus said, “Come, and you will see.” The words, “you will see” are Jesus’ promise of revelation. Physically, the disciples would see where he was staying, but spiritually, they would see who Jesus really was. Jesus’ words, “Come, and you will see,” was His invitation for them to become His disciples.

“So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour.” (v39b) After spending just one day, they made an amazing discovery: Jesus was the Messiah. Look at verse 41. “The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (that is, the Christ).” What did Andrew’s confession of the Messiah really mean? The Messiah was the central figure promised to come in the Old Testament. He would be a prophet, a priest and king. God told Moses that He would raise up a prophet like Him to be a shepherd for his people Israel. (Dt 18:15) Just as Moses delivered the Law to God’s people, the Messiah would teach God’s word to God’s people. Only the Messiah’s teaching would be powerful, full of life and He would speak spiritual authority as if He was there. As a priest, the Messiah wouldn’t offer animal sacrifices for sin, like the other priests; he would offer himself as the Lamb of God and He would take away the sin of the world. He would shed His holy blood and satisfy the demand of sin and pay the price of redemption. Those who accept His sacrifice, by faith, are forgiven and redeemed from their slavery to sin. They are no longer under God’s wrath but become His precious children. As a king, the Messiah would destroy the enemies that have attacked mankind throughout history: sin, death and the devil. He would destroy all evil and establish God’s kingdom on earth like it was in the beginning. He will restore paradise. Not only that, for all who believe in the Messiah, He would open the way to live forever in the beautiful kingdom of God. The Messiah is the Savior King sent by God to establish God’s kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

The Messiah was the hope of all the Israelite people. To the blind, he is the hope of sight. To those in bondage, he is the hope of freedom. To those suffering under the fear of death, he is the hope of life. Isaiah the prophet said, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6). Jesus, the Messiah, is everything to everyone. He satisfies our deepest need and solves all our life’s problems. Martin Luther suffered from fear. He was terrified of life, but when he met Jesus, the Messiah, all his fear disappeared and he became courageous. To find Jesus, the Messiah, is to find everything you need. It is the greatest discovery for anyone.

When Andrew came and saw, he found the Messiah in Jesus, then he immediately went to his brother Simon and told him about it. When Jesus saw Simon, he said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas.” (v42) Simon was an ordinary man. His life was ordinary; he was a fisherman. Yet Jesus didn’t see him as ordinary, he had great hope for Simon. Upon their meeting, Jesus gave Simon a new name Cephas, which means Rock. We joked that maybe Simon was as dense as one, but Jesus knew that Peter would be changed from an unstable man to become a pillar of faith for the early Christian church. Jesus saw that Peter would become a great man of God and spread the gospel to the whole world. As it came to pass just as Jesus foresaw, this ordinary man, Simon, became Peter, the Rock, who was a wonderful shepherd and history maker. Through this we realize that Jesus has a plan and purpose for everyone who follows him as disciples. Jesus doesn’t just help them realize their human dreams, but he uses them according to his own will and purpose, that is to spread the gospel to the whole world.

In verses 43-51, two more disciples follow Jesus, Philip and Nathanael. In many ways their calling is similar to that of the first disciples. However, Philip didn’t come to Jesus. Instead, Jesus finds Philip and says, “Follow me.” (v43) Sometimes Jesus calls disciples from those who approach Him and other times. Jesus goes out and finds *them*. Jesus’ calling is a divine mystery, yet it’s His one-sided grace. Jesus calls people according to His own will and purpose. When Philip realized that Jesus is the Messiah, like Andrew he brought someone to Jesus. From the beginning both Phillip and Andrew were bringing people to Jesus. Andrew brought his brother and a little boy with 5 loaves and 2 fish. Phillip brought Nathanael and an Ethiopian eunuch. And they both teamed up and brought some Greeks to Jesus. When Phillip found Nathanael and he told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” (v45) Phillip had studied his Bible. He knew the prophecies about the coming Messiah. He wanted to see the one who Moses wrote about. So when he came to Jesus, he saw Jesus as the Messiah based on the word of God. Phillip saw the Messiah in the man, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

Nathanael is an interesting character. His name is found only in the Gospel of John, five times in chapter 1 and once in chapter 21. He is never mentioned anywhere else in the New Testament. Many scholars say that Nathanael is “Bartholomew” in the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke. In John’s gospel, Nathanael comes across differently than Philip. While Phillip is a bit of a calculative man, referring to when Jesus fed the 5000, Nathanael appears to be a man of great spiritual depth, actually greater than the others. And when Phillip talks about Jesus as the Messiah, one thing bothers Nathanael a great deal. It’s not that Jesus was “the son of Joseph,” but that He was from Nazareth. Why? It’s because Nazareth was so small and insignificant that people actually despised it. Josephus, the famous Jewish historian mentioned 45 places from the region of Galilee and the Talmud, the Jewish law book, mentioned 63 places in Galilee but neither of them ever talked about the Galilean town of Nazareth. It was that small and insignificant. It may be comparable to Timewell Illinois. That city has a population of about 135. They have a bank, a post office and 2 churches. That town is so small you what could ever come out of there. For example how could a President ever come from Timewell, they don’t even have a school?

So, for Jesus to be known as a Nazarene was not a compliment. For Nathanael, at least, coming from Nazareth wasn’t in Jesus’ favor, so far as any claim to being Messiah is concerned. The Apostle John

included these words for a good reason, and that's to show that Nathanael is skeptical about Jesus. From what little he knows of Him, Nathanael initially doesn't accept Jesus as the Messiah. Thus, the radical change of mind we see in these few verses is further indication of the compelling weight of the evidence that causes Nathanael to confess Jesus as the Messiah. What was it that so quickly and thoroughly changes Nathanael's mind?

Instead of fighting with him, all Phillip says is "Come and see." So Nathanael does and as he is approaching Jesus says, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." (v47) Upon hearing this Nathanael asks, "How do you know me?" Jesus knew something specific about Nathanael, something that connected to his core. This really caught Nathanael's attention. How could Jesus know something so intimate about him if they've never met? He was intrigued but what Jesus says next, just blows him out of the water. "Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."⁴⁹ Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."(v48b-49) Why would this blow Nathanael's mind to the point that he would call Jesus Rabbi and make him exclaim you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.? Couldn't Jesus have binoculars or a web cam? It was because when Nathanael was under the fig tree, it meant he was praying in a place where no one knew where he was. This was a supernatural event. Something so stunning that it shook Nathanael to the core. Only God could have seen Nathanael during this time and so he confesses, "you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." Nathanael confesses both who Jesus is and his position.

Take a look at verses 50-51. "Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that.""⁵¹ He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." What does Jesus mean when he says this? What he is referencing here happened in Genesis when Jacob was running from his brother who wanted to kill him. And one night he has a dream in which he sees heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending where he was. Jacob realizes that the place he was, was special because God was there. So he set up a monument there because it's where he met God personally. It's where God became real to him. But Jesus modifies Jacob's dream and instead of angels descending upon a place, they descend upon a man, not just any man, but the Son of God. Jacob fixed his attention on the land upon which the ladder to heaven was placed and that's fine. But Jesus wants Nathanael to know that in time he will see that Jesus Himself is the ladder. It's by Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah, that there is access to heaven from earth. It's through Jesus Christ, God's only Mediator, that men may enter into a relationship with God and find their way to heaven. It's as though our Lord is saying, "Don't look at the ground, on which the ladder is placed; look at the ladder. I am that ladder. I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father, but by Me."

We must constantly answer Jesus' question, "What do you want," because it will drive our future. People got from Jesus what they wanted. If they wanted to see a miracle, then that's what they saw. IF they wanted to see a rebel, then they saw a trouble maker. If they wanted to see God, then they saw the Messiah. Andrew saw the Messiah in Jesus, Simon saw someone who had hope in him and could see future and who Simon would become, Phillip saw the Messiah from the word of God and Nathanael saw the Son of God, the King of Israel. It's not us that changes hearts, but Jesus. We try to get people to follow Jesus by making elaborate arguments to prove who He is, but all we really have to do is say, "Come and see," for Jesus can do the rest. So I ask again, "What do you want?" What do you really want? Do you want to know Christ, or do you want something else? Jesus invites you, "Come and you will see." When we accept Jesus' invitation to come and see, we find out not only who Jesus is and where he lives, but we also discover who we really are in God. We discover the purpose for which God made us. As our Easter retreats approaches, let's go with a new heart, a new attitude and some and see who He really is.