

John 20:1-31

Come and See!

With your heart and soul, and body

If you were to follow St. Andrew's on Facebook you would regularly read the words, "Come and See! Come and be welcomed."

Those are not hollow words; each time I add them to the post it is because it has meaning. There is much to come for and even more to see.

To see in scripture is not only to see with your eyes, but with your heart and soul, and body as well. It is a deeper kind of seeing.

Instead of some wonderful story that leads us into the words of scripture, today we are jumping right in! It is Easter after all. You have come here for a reason.

Whatever the reason, you are here today to come and see something. Maybe it is to see this place that has holds memories of bygone years, maybe it is to hear the special music, or spend a little time in this beautiful sacred place. It could be that you hope to hear a riveting sermon by an eloquent speaker – no pressure! And sorry if I disappoint



No matter what has brought you here today, you have come to see something, to hear something, to be present in this church. In what we know to be a special and holy place.

It is recorded in the gospel that three days after Jesus died and was buried, women went to Jesus's tomb to see and to complete the burial. There had been no time on the Friday when Jesus died for that to happen. It was the sabbath and that had its own set of rules about what could and could not be done. So those who loved Jesus were just thankful that they managed to get him off the cross and into a tomb until they could deal appropriately and lovingly with his body.

These women and, in the Gospel of John particularly Mary Magdalene, early on the first day of the week while it was still dark, came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. They had come to see. Come to see what was to be done. Come to see and mourn the loss of their close and dear friend, as well as mourn the loss of hope that Jesus had been to all of them.

But rather than see Jesus, there is shock and fear and terror. Mary runs to tell the disciples that the tomb is empty and they come and see. Running back, they need to know, they need to see for themselves what has happened.

This whole gospel of John has been about people coming to see. It starts right in in the first chapter when Philip meets Jesus and then tells Nathanael to come and see! “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth” (John 1:45-46) Now it was not until Nathanael meets Jesus that he too believes. He was pretty skeptical until that point even saying, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

Then there was the woman at the well who, convinced of who Jesus was after meeting him, ran into her city and proclaimed, “Come and See a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” (John 4:29-30). We are told that people left the city and went to see Jesus – to respond to the invitation to come and see.

Story after story in the Gospel of John is an invitation to come and see and people did. They came one at a time and they came in the thousands. In our reading today after the scene at the tomb, Jesus appears to his disciples and they are given the confirmation they need to believe that Jesus really is alive. They began to remember what he told them before his death about dying, and then in three days being raised to life. They see him, eat with them, they touch his wounds.

But that is not the end, Thomas was not there at this first reconnecting with the disciples, and is pointed out as being particularly skeptical, with the words, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe. About one-week later Thomas also sees Jesus and Jesus invites him to come and see, touch and believe. Thomas answered, “Jesus My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Bless are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” (John 20:28-29).

So here we are over two thousand years later asked to believe that Jesus really did escape the tomb. To understand and know that death had not hold on him. To believe even though we have not seen with our own eyes. Our Christ faith hangs on this story. Do you believe that Jesus is alive? When you came here today, what did you come to see? Did you come because you believe or because of tradition?

I cannot prove to you what you read and hear and see today is true by giving you Jesus to touch. What I can say is that there are reasons to believe that Christ is the hope for our lives today. That if you believe, it makes a difference in your life. Even if you’re not sure what you believe, but want to believe, it can make a difference in your life.

It is true that there are historians from Jesus’ time who mention a man named Jesus who was crucified by Pontius Pilate. One also mentions that he was an influential teacher. Another compelling observation is that for some reason Christianity did not disappear over the course of the last two thousand years. People have fought for it, been moved to do both great and horrible things because of the strength of their belief and through it all the church has continued.

The name Charles Colson may mean something to some of you. He was one of the men involved with Watergate and in a Washington Post headline was called Nixon's dirty tricks man.¹ He was the Republican political operative who boasted that he would "walk over my own grandmother" to ensure the re-election of President Richard M. Nixon. What you may not know is that after all of this Charles went on to found a worldwide prison fellowship ministry after his conversion to evangelical Christianity,

He wrote, "I know the resurrection is a fact, and Watergate proved it to me. How? Because 12 men testified they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it. Everyone was beaten, tortured, stoned, and put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren't true. Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world and they couldn't keep a lie for three weeks. You're telling me 12 apostles could keep a lie for 40 years? Absolutely impossible."

Now regardless of what you know or think of the man, his point is well taken. People are not willing to die for what they do not believe. They are not even likely to be put in jail or beaten for what they do not believe. These men and women who witnessed Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and finally ascension into heaven had no doubt what so ever in their minds that Jesus was the Son of God, that he loved and loves, that he had and has the power to forgive. Jesus suffered and is with his people in suffering.

Theologian Barbara Brown Taylor writes in the book *God in Pain*, "Christianity is the only world religion that confesses a God who suffers. It is not that popular an idea, even among Christians. We prefer a God who prevents suffering, only that is not the God we have got. What the cross teaches us is that God's power is not the power to force human choices and end human pain. It is, instead, the power to pick up the shattered pieces and make something holy out of them--not from a distance, but right close up."

Jesus brings hope to the hopeless, and redemption to our lives no matter what we have done. The movement of the Holy Spirit is undeniable, the grace and forgiveness of Christ powerful, and the love of God needed, given, and lived.

The invitation remains to come and see, not just on Easter Sunday, but daily. Meet God daily. Read the scriptures. If you don't have a Bible – get one. John writes, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:30-31.)

Get up, show up, and invite God to reveal God's self to you daily so that you might come and see. Come to worship not just on this holy day, but each opportunity you get,

¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/whitehouse/chuck-colson-nixons-dirty-tricks-man-dies-at-80/2012/04/21/gIQAAoOHT_story.html?utm_term=.2f210b851b9d. Accessed March 31, 2018.

because here we come and see. We come to see God at work in our love for one another, in forgiveness, in grace, and in the working out of our lives.

We celebrate the living God who has the power, desire, and deepest longing to know you, to come and see you as you come and see for yourselves.

Come and see! And in Communion Taste and See that God is Good! You are a child of God and Christ is alive! He is Risen! The tomb is empty! Alleluia!