

Message by Rev. Joyce Yanishewski

St. Andrew's Presbyterian, Thunder Bay, ON

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John 1:29-42

## Come and See

Ken and I have just come home from a vacation to Costa Rica. I know that going away for two weeks in the middle of winter, especially when you know your neighbour is taking care of the snow on your driveway is a privilege that not all get to experience, but we are deeply grateful that our lives now allow for this. The reason for the vacation was to get away from responsibilities and be renewed, but it was also an opportunity to learn and experience another people, country, and culture. Many countries are happy to extend an invitation for others to "Come and See" their part of the world and Costa Rica is one of them.

The invitation to "come and see" can be as broad as going to another country or as simple as an invitation to a movie. Whenever we are excited about something we will find a way to invite others to "come and see". Come and see the new baby. Come and see our home. Come and see my friend or family, my new dog, cat, or other pet or animal that has become part of our lives or that of those we love.

And that is what basically happens in our scripture reading from John 1:29-42 where John the baptizer introduces those with him to Jesus. He witnesses to the fact that this man Jesus is the Son of God. He tells the people around him what he saw at Jesus' baptism and he is not shy about letting people know about Jesus. A day later he even tells his own followers that this man they see is the Lamb of God and when they heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Jesus was not a threat to John's authority; he was the reason for all that John had said and done prior to this and now it was time for people to let go of John and follow Jesus.

Jesus, seeing that he is being followed, naturally asks a question, "What are you looking for?" and rather than answering directly they ask a question back... "Teacher, where are you staying?" The questions are great. Questions are a place where curiosity can abide. Often people are looking for immediate answers to their questions but when we just sit with questions and ponder questions for a time we are often invited into mystery and complexity, wonder and possibilities.

Through the work we have been doing as a church community we have been using the phrase, "Let's be curious about that." It is not a cop out but rather an invitation to wonder, explore possibilities, try out some things and say again, "Let's be curious about that."

In this scripture reading, John's disciples, one unnamed and another introduced as Andrew, ask questions, but they are questions that one might see as being curious about this Jesus. And Jesus said to them, "Come and see." Now they went to where he

was staying but then remained with him all that day. The curiosity led Andrew to find his brother and say to him, "We have found the Messiah, and he brings Simon to Jesus. If we were to continue reading in the Gospel of John, we would later find Philip telling Nathanael to *come and see* Jesus. And even further on in the gospel the woman at the well would tell others in her community to *come and see* the man who knows everything about her even though she has just had a short conversation with Jesus.

This is one of the take-aways for us in this gospel, it is the invitation to *come and see*. A few things to think about, first of all is that, even for those of us who have been part of the church for a long time, we are invited to *come and see* Jesus, not only in the church, but in our lives everyday. We become witnesses to what Jesus is up to in the world through God and the power of the Holy Spirit.

To that end, it might be important for us to pay attention to what God is and has been up to in our own lives...to name it. It also becomes an exercise in seeing in what ways our lives separate us from God through our words, thoughts, and actions that do not aid us in being the image bearers of God that we hope to be. Image bearers in the sense that we love and have compassion for others and the world. Not image bearers in the sense that we hold power and authority, but that as human beings we have a sense of justice and mercy that sees all and every life as sacred and having immense value. Living in the world in ways that bring dignity to all we meet and brings about change for those who suffer indignity.

And before we go on to talk more about this, I would like you to take a few minutes to ponder why it is that you come to church, what draws you to this place and to worship.

So, what is it that brings you to church? Any reason you have is a valid one. Some come because it feels like home, a safe space. Some people come for community. Those and more are wonderful reasons to be part of the church. I also pray that, if it is not so already, at some point it will be because of Jesus. That you come to see not only your community, but to see Jesus. To love Jesus and be loved by Jesus.

This invitation to *come and see* is about finding relationship, being in relationship with Jesus and with each other. Recently an article was published in the Bayview magazine about our church and through that writing we hope that people will "come and see" what St. Andrew's is doing and what we are about. So, we should know what we are about. First and foremost, we are to be about love, God's love, the love of Jesus for each person. Yes, we are doing a lot of things and being curious about how we be the church and how we be the church in community, but it starts with love and relationship.

Anyone of us here today should first know that we are loved by God and by one another even if we are strangers to each other. God's love through Jesus supersedes anything else. That is our primary work as the church and followers of Jesus is to point to love. From there we learn about one another and from one another. We build relationships of trust that reflect the uniqueness and value of each individual. However, we can never lose sight of the fact that the reason for the church is not the building or what ever

project we are up to, the reason for the church is people and learning to be in relationship with God and one another. Anything else make us another service organization.

The church is to stand out from that as a place of hope, peace, joy, and love that goes beyond our understanding to a place of amazing mystery and transformation of lives. If and when people enter into the church they are seeking something. Often, they are seeking meaning and purpose and if we demonstrate the love of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit in the ways we are called to, then all this will lead people to lives that feel whole. They know they matter. We will never do this perfectly but we still strive to create this kind of world and this kind of safe haven in our church community.

It starts with the invitation to *come and see*. *Come and see* who we are. *Come and see*. You don't need to say much else except meet them here. Let them come with curiosity and when they do come, let our response be love and relationship within this family we call the church and with Jesus as we live out our vocation as image bearers of God's love and light.

In Christ, with Christ and through Christ. Amen.