

Come and See

John 1:29-42 (Isaiah 49:1-7)

Sermon by Mark Schloneger

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The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God."

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter). (John 1:29-42, NRSV)

*I have climbed the highest mountains
I have run through the fields
Only to be with you
Only to be with you.*

*I have run, I have crawled
I have scaled these city walls
These city walls
Only to be with you
But I still haven't found
What I'm looking for.*

*But I still haven't found
What I'm looking for.*

(U2, "I still haven't found what I'm looking for")

It takes superhuman strength not to belt those lyrics.
For those of you who may not know,
the words I just quoted are lyrics from a song by the group U2.
In the car, when the song comes on the radio during '80's weekend,
I belt it out, but when I ask our children to join in,

they just kind of roll their eyes and shrug their shoulders.
No, in that one respect, I still haven't found what I'm looking for in them.

I still haven't found what I'm looking for.
The question is, of course, what are you looking for?
That's what Jesus asked those two disciples of John who began following him.
What are you looking for?

Have you ever thought about that question, really?
What are you looking for?
What do your choices, your worries, your hopes, your fears,
the flow of your money, the use of your time
what do these things say about your deepest desires, what you are looking for?

Power? Love? Acceptance? Approval? Security?
Independence? Justice? Forgiveness? Revenge?

Which of those or others are most important to you?
And where do you go to satisfy them?
Have you found what you are looking for?

The verses we have before us from John
are filled with titles and descriptions for Jesus.

The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
The One who was before me.
The One upon whom the Spirit rests.
The One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.
Son of God.
Rabbi. Messiah. Anointed one.

Jesus surely fulfills all of these titles and descriptions, and more.
But all of them -- all of them -- were given to him by others.
Jesus' first words in John's gospel
were not to give himself a proper introduction.
No, Jesus first words were to ask his first followers:
"What are you looking for?"

When John's two disciples respond with,
"Rabbi, where are you staying?"
Jesus doesn't say,
Well, you know, I'm much more than a rabbi . . .
No, he responds simply, with an invitation.
"Come and see."

Meaning come be with me where I am

What you are you looking for?

Come and see.

Those are the first words of Jesus in John's gospel.

The next day, Jesus decided to leave for Galilee.

There, he found Philip.

Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida.

And Jesus told Philip, "Follow me."

What are you looking for? Come and see. Follow me.

Philip did, and the first thing that Philip did was to go and find Nathanael.

Philip told Nathanael that he had found the one

that Moses and the Prophets had written about and his name was Jesus --

Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

"Nazareth! Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Nathanael asked.

And do you know what Philip said?

"Come and see."

"Come and see," he said. Come and see. Come and see.

This was Jesus' invitation to his first disciples.

And this was the same invitation that those first disciples

told to brothers and friends and other family members.

It was not, "If you are going to die tonight, do you know where you will go?"

It was not pray this prayer or say these words or send in this money

or come to this church or do this but not that.

No, they said, "Come and see."

What are you looking for?

Come and see.

The life of a disciple is not about expressing assent to a series of doctrinal statements about Jesus – it's about actually following Jesus.

Yet, so much of what we see is conditioned by our culture, our expectations, our life experiences.

How do we open ourselves to truly see Jesus, the "light to the nations?"

This past week,

I attended School for Leadership Training at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

This is a conference for pastors and church leaders,

and this year's theme was "Shalom in the Streets: Recapturing God's Vision in Ordinary Places."

One of the speakers at this conference was Shannan Martin.

Shannan lives in Goshen, on North Fifth Street with her husband Cory and their children. She writes a popular blog, ShannanMartinwrites.com and is the author of two books. Shannan's husband, Cory, is chaplain of the Elkhart County Jail.

Shannan often gets asked to conferences and churches to speak, but she admitted to me that she was a little anxious about speaking at a seminary before pastors. "I'm not a theologian," she said. I told her that wasn't true. Because she studies God and the way of God, I said, she is a theologian. But, still, I knew what she meant. I felt the same way.

But the reason why I find Shannan to be so challenging and inspiring is not because she possesses an advanced degree or because she has profound insights based on her vast knowledge of the biblical languages and cultures. No, it's because of her life, the way that she has learned to live her life. She and Cory and their family have embedded themselves in the Chamberlain neighborhood, a neighborhood that many in Goshen consider the other side of the tracks.

When she talks, she tells stories from the neighborhood, and the neighbors who she has learned to love, who have been in her house, whose houses she has been in: formerly incarcerated people looking to get settled after years in jail. people who struggle with addictions, neighbors occupying houses that are infested with cockroaches houses that can only be heated by an open oven door. She knows these people. No, their front door is not always open -- they need their space. But their doors' hinges swing easily, she says. Their door opens easily.

Shannan's testimony is never about how much she and Cory have done -- how they have been a good influence on their neighborhood (and they surely have). It's about how they have loved and been loved by their neighbors. About how she has learned to know the love and embrace of God through the love and embrace of her neighbors. You want to know Jesus?, she asks. Then get low. Get low to the ground among the people you encounter. She said that she had Cory have developed a rule: That they will invite no one to church unless they have first eaten at their table. The road to church lead through their dining room.

Quoting Barbara Brown Taylor, she writes, *We cannot love what we do not know.*

*We cannot know what we do not see.
And we cannot see anything, really,
until we devote ourselves to the lost art of paying attention.*
(Shannan Martin, *The Ministry of Ordinary Places* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2018), 19.

What are you looking for?
Come and see.

Some years ago, there was a page from a children's magazine hanging by our back door.
It contained words written by Saint Teresa of Avila.
Teresa of Avila was a sixteenth-century Spanish nun
who called for reforms in the church because of what she perceived as spiritual laxity.
She was a mystic and is best known for her writings about prayer and life in the spirit.

I don't think it's a historical accident that the first Anabaptists were contemporaries of Teresa.
That's because the words hanging beside our door express something
that we as Anabaptist Christians hold dear.
Maybe you've heard these words before.

*Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

I like these words, and maybe that's not a surprise.
Mennonites have always emphasized a life of discipleship –
a whole life, meaning hearts, minds, and bodies.
The way we live our lives matters.
It matters to God, it matters to us, it matters to our neighbors, it matters to our enemies.

Still, those words weighed heavily to me.
Christ has no body now on earth but mine?
That's a weight that I cannot carry.
In some ways, those words make me want me to flee and hide,
not come and see.

There are big problems in this world, and we are not equipped to solve them.
We cannot save the world.
We can't even save each other from financial ruin, from unexpected deaths,
from major surgery, from acts of violence.
We cannot answer life's deepest questions.
We have no political agenda that will resolve the deep problems in our country and world.
Yet, yet . . . we say with confidence, that among us there is one whom the world does not know.
We say that among us, look! Look!
There is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world..

What are you looking for?
Come and see.

Which brings me back to the words of St. Teresa of Avila. Perhaps the key to this poem is "yours."
As long as I've read, I've read "yours" to refer to "me".
Christ has no body, no feet, no eyes, no hands but mine.
But maybe I've been reading it incorrectly.
Maybe this wise Catholic saint meant that her poem should always be read with "you" in mind.

What would happen if we treated everyone as if we were serving Christ himself?
What would happen if we looked to point others to the presence of Christ with them and in them --
the grocery store cashier, or the one behind you in the checkout line,
or the man begging for money on the side of the road,
or your neighbor wearing the MAGA hat,
or the person in the car before you,
who cut you off and then had the gall to turn left on a busy street?

What would happen if we remembered Teresa's as she wrote it?

*Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

If we treated everyone we meet in this way,
humbly serving as if we were serving Christ himself,
what would happen?

We might find that we see Jesus,
and, to our surprise, we might find that we look a lot like him, too.

What are you looking for?

Look!

Jesus says, "Come and see . . . Follow me."