

The Rev. Erin Hensley
January 14, 2018
The Second Sunday after Epiphany: John 1:43-51

Come and See

In our Gospel reading appointed for last Sunday from Mark's gospel, we saw Jesus coming out of the water of the river Jordan, the heavens being torn apart, and the Spirit of God descending like a dove on him.

In our Gospel reading today from John's gospel, we see Jesus calling his disciples. We wonder what Nathanael, only mentioned in this gospel, was thinking and feeling under the fig tree. We wonder about the greater things to which Jesus refers when he says, "You will see greater things than these." The description Jesus gives is enigmatic: "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

The disciples will see something more than a teacher who knows the desires of his student hearts and who will share the desires of our Father's heart. The disciples will see God seeking relationship with humanity not in theory, but in flesh and in practice. For John's Gospel, Jesus is the ladder between heaven and earth. God makes Godself known to humanity through the Incarnation. The disciples see God seeing and being in relationship with people, and in turn, are invited to see accordingly.

I invite you to turn in your bibles to John chapter 1, verse 35. You can use your phone or use your pew bibles. Here's how the come and see thing started: John the Baptist saw Jesus walking by when some of his students were with him. He pointed to Jesus and proclaimed "Look here is the Lamb of God!" Two of John's students heard him and then followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he asked them, "What are you looking for?" and they didn't answer with a statement. Instead, they asked Jesus, where are you staying? Where are you abiding?" Jesus responds with an invitation to relationship "Come and see." Andrew, one of the two who followed Jesus, found his brother Simon Peter and said they had found the anointed one for whom they had been waiting, and brought Simon Peter to Jesus. The next day Jesus went to Galilee and found Philip and said found me. He followed and then went to get his friend Nathanael and said "We've found the one about whom the Hebrew Scriptures wrote, Jesus of Nazareth. Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Philip, like Jesus before invites to Nathanael to come and see for himself that God's dream is being fulfilled in this human (son of Joseph) from Nazareth, a Podunk farming community perched atop a small hill and not anywhere close to popular trade routes.¹ Can anything good come out of someone from that place? Philips says, "Come and see."

So did the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Can anything good come out of Greensboro, North Carolina? Montgomery, Alabama? Memphis, Tennessee? To those with disbelief, Martin did not argue, he preached and said come and see for yourself.

¹ <http://www1.cbn.com/BibleArcheology/archive/2010/12/19/five-things-you-didnt-know-about-nazareth>

Come and see the dream of God where all of humanity, no people of only one color, are respected and given equal access to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in this great country of ours. Come and see for yourself.

In a speech at an Interfaith Prayer Breakfast, the Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III said, “Sometimes your salvation comes in unexpected sources. God can use anybody, anywhere at anytime. Moss reminds us to not let the external cloud our vision of the internal.”²

Bob Moses tenured professor from the north was asked to come down south and be a civil rights leader in Mississippi. He came down south and brought people to Fannie Lou Hamer, a black woman from Mississippi with a 3rd grade education. Bob Moses said, she knows more than any professor; I’m going to follow her. Come and see.

Many people told King, don’t you affiliate with Bayard Ruston, we’re not sure about his sexual orientation. The Rev. Dr. King responded, “I don’t care bout his orientation. I want to know ‘Can he teach me how to organize? Can he teach me about non-violence?’ I’ve got to build a coalition. Come and see.

There was a man called Cesar Chavez, the Rev. Dr. King wanted to go out west and connect with him, but other people wondered if this would be of any good. He’s not a part of the movement; he’s focusing on migrant workers. King responded, as the Rev. Dr. Moss III tells it, “If we want to build a poor people’s campaign, we need to learn what is going on out west because what he is going on out west affects what happens in the south. Come and see.

Can anything good come out of anywhere and every one? This is not necessarily and ancient question is it. Today, on this second Sunday after Epiphany, Jesus, the Church says to the world, “Come and see.” In this part of Jesus’ body called St. Alban’s, come and see that young and old, middle class and clubhouse and a paycheck away from the street, see and love and teach each other. Come and see the teenagers with the torn jeans and the wise men with no hair learning from and teaching one another. Come and see that people of all orientations worship together, not merely tolerating one another. Come and see the one human race, in its glorious difference and diversity. Come and see a phenomenal, beautiful part of the very Incarnation of the living God. *Amen.*

² <http://www.wral.com/news/local/video/13312335/> The three examples that follow are included in the Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III’s January 20, 2014 talk at an interfaith prayer breakfast in Chicago.