

September 8, 2024 Come and See, Go and Tell John 1: 35 – 51, Matthew 28:19-20

Next Sunday is an important day because we expect more people to come back to church nationwide. It is Back to Church Sunday, and we anticipate our families, friends, and members who have not been able to attend church recently to join us. Today is the preparation for this big national event!

Today's sermon focuses on what Billy Graham termed "Operation Andrew" for the amazing power of invitation in outreach. **The three-letter word "Come and See" is a very powerful statement of confidence in what you have and what you want to showcase to others for them to enjoy.** Many of us have tried a product or purchased an item because someone we trusted has recommended it to us. Many of us have gone to a restaurant recommended by a friend, and many of us have rented a movie because someone else thought we'd enjoy it or because they said it was fantastic. We are more likely to follow a recommendation from someone we know and trust than from a stranger.

In today's story, we start with John and two of his disciples. While they are standing there, they see Jesus walking by. John immediately proclaims in a loud voice, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" His disciples then left John and started following Jesus. The Gospel of John's account then tells us about Jesus and his first disciples. **These two disciples followed Jesus because someone they knew and trusted recommended him.**

This pattern can be seen with other people in our story as well. One of John's disciples who followed Jesus was **Andrew**, and the passage emphasizes **that the first thing he did was find his brother Simon to tell him about Jesus.** Simon eventually became Peter, a major leader of the early church. Would Simon have been as open to getting to know Jesus without the witness of his brother Andrew?

In another example, after meeting Jesus and deciding to follow him, **Philip finds his friend Nathanael.** The story suggests that Philip specifically sought out Nathanael to introduce him to Jesus. Despite Nathanael's initial reluctance, he eventually accepts Philip's invitation. The question is, does Nathanael accept because Jesus is from Nazareth, or **because his trusted friend Philip invited him?**

Ultimately, Jesus is the one extending the invitations in our story. He invites us to consider who he is. When John's two disciples choose to follow Jesus, he intentionally turns to address them. He asks, "What are you looking for?" Their response comes in the form of a question: "Where are you staying?" **Jesus' response is powerful: "Come and see."** It's an invitation to experience the first fruits of salvation. Once you catch a glimpse of the Kingdom of God, nothing else will satisfy you. Come and see.

For years, the Billy Graham organization capitalized on this passage with a program called "Operation Andrew." In preparation for a big crusade, organizers recruited hundreds of volunteers from area churches who agreed not only to attend the crusade but also to bring at least one other person with them. **You can do the math: Whatever the size of the congregation, it**

doubles when everyone follows Andrew's example and brings a family member, neighbor, or friend with them.

The major challenge is **how do we share Jesus with our families, co-workers, and friends?** Today, we learn from some effective New Testament evangelists who only had to say three words. In "Come and See," Philip shows us how to respond when folks respond negatively to our excitement about Jesus. Nathaniel is skeptical, just like others you will run into. Through his comment, "Can any good thing come from Nazareth?" he reveals the disgust that Galileans have with Nazarenes and his prejudice issues.

But what does Philip do? Does he give up? Does he walk away? Does he get discouraged? Does he get out his Bible and preach a message? **No**, he says two very important terms that you and I must learn – **COME AND SEE!** We have heard about the Messiah, the coming King. Well, guess what? We found Him. Philip didn't preach a three-point sermon. **He didn't start condemning Nathaniel for his bad attitude.** He didn't judge his actions. He simply invited Nathaniel to **COME AND SEE!**

Remember the Samaritan Woman who speaks on behalf of everyone who has a past (John 4:6,7). This is a lady who had 5 divorces. This lady is now living with another man. This lady has a past that she is not proud of. But today, she is an evangelist. Come and See a man who told me all things. I didn't think I was good enough for Him. I don't know why He chose to talk to me. I was just going to get water, But I found everlasting life.

Our responsibility is not to condemn sinners but to guide them to Jesus. We are called to preach love rather than condemnation. **You can't clean fish before you catch them**, so get them first to COME AND SEE then allow God to clean up their lives. Our task is to share the message. When something significant happens in your life, it's natural to want to share it with others, saying, "You'll never guess what just happened to me!" An old camp song expresses this sentiment with the lyrics:

"It only takes a spark to get a fire going, And soon all those around will warm up in its glowing; That's how it is with God's love once you experience it: You spread the love to everyone, You want to pass it on." Hymn 572

Today, we are encouraging you to use the Church Business "Come and See" Cards, which are being given to invite others to witness God's goodness and faithfulness among us!

The purpose is to invite people to come and see the man who can turn lives around, change people's situations for the better, restore parents' fellowship with children, and reclaim backsliders who need to restore their fellowship with God.

You are not inviting them to come and see the pastor or to hear good music; you are inviting them to witness the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who is waiting to meet them and turn their lives around! **All you have to do is say, "Come and See." Are we ready to pass it on?**