

January 24, 2021
Rev. Jane Florence
Gathering the Team
John 1: 43-46



We read the birth stories about Jesus from Matthew and Luke 's gospels on Christmas eve. Last week - we popped in on Mark to read his introduction of Jesus which is not a birth story but the baptism scene at the Jordan. In that story, which is found in all the gospels, Jesus begins his earthly ministry. The Jewish Jesus Movement of the first century begins which gave birth to the Christian church who has been reenacting baptism as initiation into the Way of Jesus for 2000 years since.

Today's scripture will take us over to gospel of John for his introduction to Jesus. John's opening, like Mark, has no baby, no magi and no shepherds. John doesn't begin in Bethlehem or Nazareth or the Jordan River. John is way out there. The Cosmic Christ is introduced where stars are forming and spinning. In the beginning, where there is darkness and chaos, "there was Logos and Logos was with God and the Word was God." John starts us off where the word that was part of God at creation of the vast universe became flesh and dwelled- lived amongst us. (John 1:1)

The question we explore throughout our faith journey is, 'what does all this mean to me? to you?' How do we respond to Christmas? or more specifically : How do we respond to the Christ - Word of God- logos taking human form? What does the Incarnation of the Divine in human flesh and bone mean to you? All the gospels say the work of Jesus started at his Baptism, then what? Today's scripture is the 'then what.' Then, Jesus gathers a team. Even Jesus doesn't work alone! Our faith has always been about community - companions - people on the journey together - from the very beginning. We are people struggling to understand the way of Love. We are people encouraging, challenging, and reminding one another of the path.

The stories tell how Jesus launched his movement by gathering a team to work with him. The first members of his team were actually part of John the Baptizers group. They were students of John, his disciples. John sees Jesus walk by one day. He points to Jesus and tells his disciples, "There's the guy. That's who I've been talking about." Two of John's disciples then follow Jesus. They literally follow Jesus because someone they respected recommended Jesus. Listen with me to John's words:

Jesus turns around to these two men who are following him and says, "What are you looking for?" They answer Teacher, where are you staying? Where do you live? Where do you reside? Jesus says 'Come and see.' They do then one of them goes and finds his brother and brings him to Jesus. Then John writes "the Next day:

Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, [it is] Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.' Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.'

May we hear what God's Spirit says to us today.

Did you follow the chain of events there? John the Baptizer points two of his disciples to Jesus. They follow. They learn where Jesus dwells. Then go get their brother. Then their

brother goes to get another, and so on and so on. Each one goes and tells another one, and each one says, Come and See. Come and See what I found! Come and See who we found! Just Come and See for yourself!

A former bishop of the Southwest Texas Conference wrote a book some years past titled, *Each One Disciple One*. It was a very short book, with a very simple premise found right here in this story. What do followers of Jesus do after they have experienced Jesus? Without exception, people who experience Jesus invite others to Come and See. Each one is to disciple one more. That's how one man with a union to God and a vision of Love became followed by millions of people around the globe. Someone said, Look what I found! Come and See! Notice the lack of theology in that statement, 'come and see.' Notice the lack of argument and verifiable proof, 'come and see.' Notice the lack of debate, or coercion, no guilt, fear, intimidation, and no threat of hell. It is just a simple invitation that lands on human curiosity, just Come and See

It is a message that plays out throughout the rest of the gospel. The leper says come and see this guy who made me clean and brought me back to the family. The blind man says come and see this guy who gave me new sight. The woman at the well returns to her village and says, 'come and see this man who knows my soul and welcomes us his ethnic enemies!'

Come and See is all they say, that's all we have to say. Now in this age of virtual gatherings, virtual worship, and digital media at our fingertips, we can say Come and See with ever more ease. You can share a link of our worship in an email to a friend and say, come and see with me. This is a church that says everyone is a child of God. beloved and welcome. Come and see with me. You can share an opportunity to feed or serve with this faith community and say, come and see how we make a difference. You can share a class, a lecture, an opportunity for a small group to be in conversation and learning together with friends and family across the country. Come and see, a place where my questions are honored and differences celebrated. Come and see. We can come into space with one another without even leaving our homes. I was leading a small group this week, six people studying lovingkindness. Three were here in Lincoln, one was in Texas, one in Arizona, and one in Nevada. We came together on a screen from around the country to Come and see the practice of lovingkindness.

When these two disciples of John the Baptizer start following Jesus, Jesus turns around to these two men who are following him and says, "What are you looking for?" They answer "Teacher, where do you dwell?" Jesus says "Come and see" This is how Jesus begins, Jesus gathers a team. Remember, even Jesus doesn't go this path alone! The Way of Jesus has always been about community - companions -people on the journey together - from the very beginning. We are people struggling to understand the way of Love, people encouraging, challenging, and reminding one another whose we are.

Jesus turns and asks those who are curious: What are you looking for? The same question lingers today: What are YOU looking for in your faith journey? What are you looking for in your life? What are you seeking? Purpose, peace, contentment, love, meaning?

Come and see is the invitation to us all and the words for us to share. Come and see the place where the Word of Love is with you, even in the swirl of darkness and chaos. Come and see the practices we share to connect us with God's dwelling place in our hearts. Come and see with eyes of your hearts images of God all around you all day long, and then invite others, "Come and See God's love for all." May it be so