

Come and See
John 1:35-42
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
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Do you ever think about how much you rely on your vision?

For those who have suffered with disease or injuries of the eyes, things that have taken their sight or threatened to do so, the answer is inevitably yes.

Even those of us who experience what we might call “normal aging” with eye sight getting a little worse and some activities requiring the assistance of glasses, we too, have surely thought about how much our vision matters.

Meanwhile, many of us also remember those days - often younger days that some among us are still experiencing - when we thought little about the importance of our vision even as we enjoyed all the benefits of it.

Even in our common lexicon we have many phrases that remind us of how much we count on our vision. We say things like, “I have to see it to believe it” or we talk about “losing sight of something” or we encourage someone to “open their eyes” to a truth they are avoiding. Missouri, the state directly to our south, is the “show me state,” a phrase that isn’t technically only about vision, but about evidence, being shown the results of something rather than just hearing promises or descriptions. If we started to pay attention we might be surprised by how often in our daily life we give instructions or suggestions that are about looking and seeing.

I realized some years ago that vision might be the sense I rely on most. Even though I can pretty easily navigate around my house in the dark, I am far more likely to turn on a light than to count on my other senses to guide me. While I could make many recipes from memory, I always pull out the recipe card and read it again just to make sure I’m doing it right. While touch might be able to tell me if a child is running a fever or if the counter has crumbs on it, I want to read the exact temperature on a thermometer or see with my eyes that the counter is clean and clear. While I might smell something burning, I want to go and look before making that declaration.

So, maybe we shouldn’t be surprised when Jesus’ invitation to his would-be disciples begins with, “Come and see.” After all, if they are to follow Jesus, they need to know what he is about.

But have you ever wondered what they saw?

Melissa Bane Sevier writes this, she says, “...Jesus invites them to ‘come and see.’ We have only our imaginations to guess what they find...Do they see him interacting with family? Hosting the Sabbath meal? Praying over the food? Singing a psalm? Laughing

at a joke? Telling stories? Do they see him sharing leftovers with the poor? Talking to the unclean people on the way home? Talking about what to do about a widowed neighbor or a depressed friend? Do they hear some of his teaching, or is just seeing how he lives on a random day life-changing enough? Whatever they experience, it is interesting or moving enough for them to tell some others about it, and to give them the same invitation to come and see” ([Where are you staying? | Contemplative Viewfinder](#)).

I am particularly struck by her question, “Is just seeing how he lives on a random day life-changing enough?”

Come and see.

Come and see - because that was the best way they would have a sense of who he was.

Come and see - because if they were going to follow him, they needed to know what they were committing to.

Because too often, in both the ancient and modern worlds, we have worked to create Jesus in the image of our own choosing rather than actually seeing, rather than acknowledging, who he really was.

Some people were awaiting a Messiah who would overthrow the government and take back the throne for Israel in an act of military might. Many believe that the depth of this conviction, rather his own desire to turn on Jesus, drove Judas’ actions at the end of Jesus’ life.

Some people heard and understood the law in certain ways and so they were looking for a leader who didn’t challenge them but reinforced their own beliefs and understandings. This might have been at the heart of so many conflicts Jesus had with people around him.

But what happens...how do we understand Jesus...when we really “come and see”?

Who do we see when we watch Jesus?

Think about that question. Think about the stories that come to mind most readily when you think of Jesus. What do you see in him in those stories?

When we come and see, we will see that...

Jesus is one who entered into the human realities of other people from celebrations to physical ailments to death itself. And in these moments he experienced joy and grief and everything in between. We see a Jesus who honored in so many ways the human experience.

When we come and see, we will see that...

Jesus is one who interacted with unexpected people, willing to cross boundaries set by his culture and to listen to the voices of those most often silenced. We see a Jesus who didn't embrace hierarchies of power and labels of us and them.

When we come and see, we will see that...

Jesus is one who valued those others did not, pausing with children, standing up for women, defending outsiders. We see a Jesus who saw the humanity in all the people around him even when the world he lived in told him they were less than.

We can keep making the list of things we see in Jesus. But the challenge isn't just to notice, but then to do something with what we see...the challenge is for us to become like Jesus.

Remember, this invitation was given to those who set out to follow him. "Come and see," Jesus said, because he wanted them to know what they were getting into. But this wasn't just an easy invitation to witness and walk away.

There is something else in this story Dale read for us today. Jesus says, "Come and see," and John tells us they stayed, they remained with Jesus.

The Greek word there is "meno," a word best translated, "abide."

In other words, they were invited first to come and see, but that led them to stay, to experience, to live in and with Jesus.

We often think about Jesus abiding with us, but what if we abide with him? What if we not only celebrate his ongoing and faithful presence with us but what if we also commit our lives to living with him, living in his ways, to not only seeing his life, but to modeling ours after his?

It begins with "come and see" but it doesn't end there.

Rather, having seen who Jesus is, we are invited to abide with him, to live in his ways, and to show others in our living what the love of Jesus looks like.

Come and see...watch and learn...abide with...follow...and live in ways that allow your life to be its own invitation for others to see who Jesus is. Amen.