

EPIPHANY TWO, YEAR A, JANUARY 15, 2023

Come and See! It's a simple expression that is usually filled with excitement and anticipation. Marketers basically use this expression to entice people to come and see their latest and greatest products whether it be a car or a new phone or some new kind of electronic gadget. We call our family and friends and tell them to come and see what I just got for Christmas or birthday or whatever. It's usually because we have gotten something we think is unique, beautiful, interesting, funny or maybe it's just plain weird. Perhaps it's something in nature that takes our breath away and we want others to see it – a double rainbow, a beautiful sunrise or sunset, a baby fawn or a brilliant colored tree. We want to share with others what we believe is wonderful and spectacular.

Now in this morning's gospel two of John the Baptist's disciples decide to check Jesus out. When Jesus says "come and see" to them it isn't about seeing what Jesus is doing or where he is going. He isn't saying, "Hey, look at me, I'm better than John the Baptist." It's not about what Jesus can do for them. He wants them to "see" in a different way.

You know the Epiphany season is about seeing things in a different light. Some people who have had epiphanies call it their aha moment. "Oh, now I get it". You know the light bulb goes off and we say, "Now I understand." The truth is the word that is translated as "see" really should be translated as insight. So Jesus is telling these two disciples to come and get a new insight into God. It's an invitation to discover something new about God's ways.

"Come and see" is really how the disciples' story begins. When you think about it, it's a wonderful line and a great way to start a story. "Come and see", is the invitation for us too to start our story and to explore and discover new insights into God that just might shake us up. It's an invitation to come and look for God in places where we've never been or thought God could be. It's an invitation to catch a glimpse of who we can truly be. Come and see means to hope, believe, and follow.

So what are you looking for? How do we follow and find this new insight into God. I do believe that deep in our souls, we are looking for something to believe in and hold on to, something important enough to live for. We are looking for challenge and purpose and direction.

However, that challenge and purpose for real life to be lived has to be grounded in the being of God. Not the god of our making but the God that Jesus points to and tells us to come and see. Let's face it, we do have a tendency to make God into our own image which takes on ethnic, social, cultural and even political attributes. But Jesus is telling us that's not who God is. You can't make God into your own image. So Jesus invites us to come and see who God really is.

And Jesus tells us in so many ways. God is that creative spark that is pure goodness, compassion, justice and forgiveness that incorporates and is inclusive of all of creation. But most of all, God is the essence of unconditional love and anything that negates that love is not God. That is the truth about God. God's truth is not ultimately a riddle to be solved rather it is a life to be lived. So when Jesus says 'come and see' he is telling us don't focus on what you don't know. Focus on what you do know about God. The prophet Micah said, "You know what the Lord requires of you. It is to do justice, love

mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" And Jesus reminds us to focus on that truth about God. Come and see and act on what we know.

The gospel and the God of love who calls us to come and see how magnanimous and inclusive God is claims everyone. That means black, white, brown, Muslim Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, politically left right or center, gay, straight, trans, women, men and children.

Come and see is our mantra to open our eyes and see the God of love all around us and to work for God's love to penetrate every fiber of our being so that we can proclaim loudly that we are part of God's endless, unfathomable love. We need to promise not to let our faith be a secret, or merely some personal act, but to use it publicly. People are suffering, and if we ignore it – if we sit by idly in the midst of it – or even blame "the other" for everything we think is wrong - we can't call ourselves Christians. If we rest on our own comforts and privileges without using them to help those Jesus described as the "least", then we're not standing where God would have us stand. Ask yourselves, who are the least? Who are the persecuted? Who are the ones we are trying to keep out? Who are the poor? Who are the immigrants? Whenever we see those who are not like us being demeaned, bullied, persecuted and not given the same rights as we enjoy, then these are the ones God calls us to stand with.

In many respects we have to stop being Christians and become more Christ like. Christianity is meant to be a loving way of life, not just a system of beliefs and requirements. We get too hung up with rules and regulations or, my biggest pet peeve is people who cherry pick scripture to support a specific point of view that excludes others instead of following what Christ has taught us. All we need to do is to really look at the parables of Jesus, his healings, his teachings to know what is required of us. Who did Jesus dine with, who did he heal, who did he lift up? Everyone who society rejected or deemed as worthless, Jesus gave compassion and love. To be the people of Christ requires that we do the same. The list is endless of those who are being purposely kept on the fringes of society. We need to be people who won't stand still or look away in the face of oppression and suffering. It's a call we hear again and again. We cannot have faith without works, because that is no faith at all.

Remember God is at work in the world and we are part of it. Justice, mercy, compassion, love and forgiveness is our mandate. It is who we've been called by God in Christ to be. It is what Jesus meant when he said Come and See. Have the audacity to believe that. Have the audacity to believe, as Martin Luther King Jr. said, "that everyone can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits." That's what it means to be Christ like.

As we move into this Epiphany season I encourage all of us to learn to live like we belong to each other – like we are responsible for each other. We must rediscover the beauty of interdependence – the fact that we are mutually intertwined, that I cannot be who I am without you. We have the ability to both crush each other or to build each other up. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. With great power, comes great responsibility. Ask yourselves, what would life look like if I truly believe that my well-being, my interests, my hope for the future is wrapped up in yours? What would our social world look like if we took that responsibility seriously in a Christ like way?

There is a song that was written a few years ago which is based on a poem by a Somalian refugee. The song is called "We can come together. The poem says, "In my

dreams I saw a world free of violence, hunger, suffering. A world filled with love. Now awake in this world I beg, let my dream come true. If we come together, we can mend a crack in the sky.

So come and see and have the audacity to believe that we can come together to mend the cracks in the sky. Come and see a new way of living. Come and see God's way of life which is immeasurable love. Come and see and be audacious in the name of our loving God. Amen.