



*Come and See*

John 1: 29-42

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First Federated Church, Peoria, Illinois

The Rev. Dr. Forrest Krummel

Jesus essentially said that there are two kinds of people in world; those who see that our connectedness to God is in direct proportion to our connectedness to one another and those who don't. He once told a parable about these two groups of people. On the Day of Judgement, as the parable goes, all of the people of the world will be divided into two groups. To one group the Son of Man will say, "Welcome to the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of time for when I was hungry you fed me, when I was naked you clothed me, when I was abandoned, sick and alone you cared for me and visited me." "When did we do this?" the first group asked. "When you did it unto the least, you did it unto me."

The Son of Man told the other group to go away. "Why?" they demanded. "Because when I was hungry to did NOT feed, me when I was naked you did NOT clothe me, when I was abandoned, sick and alone you neither cared for me nor did you visit me." "When did we ever see you hungry or naked or sick or alone and not care for you?" they asked with some sense of incredulity. "When you did NOT do it unto the least, you did not do it unto me.

I'm sure that the second group never thought of themselves as uncaring or calloused or jaded or bad or anything else. They probably saw themselves as good responsible men and women. They were just blind to the face of the Son of Man in the faces of the Least.

Not to recognize someone is not an uncommon human experience. People constantly surprise us, even those whom we know well. I imagine that the childhood friends of any of our Presidents were surprised to think that one of them, was the leader of the most powerful nation that the world has ever seen. Today my wife and I celebrate our 40th wedding anniversary. Even after being together for 40 years she still surprises and amazes me. I'm sure I do, too, but maybe not in sure a positively surprising way!

In our Gospel lesson John the Baptizer did not recognize who Jesus was at first. This is in spite of the fact that he knew Jesus just about his entire life. Somehow his mother and Jesus' mother were kin. When the angel Gabriel visited Jesus' mother Mary to tell her that she would bear a son who would be the Savior of the world, she was told that confirmation of the angel's words would be seen if she visited her kinswoman Elizabeth, who in her old age, when she was beyond child-bearing years, was in her sixth month with child. So, it is very reasonable to think that John and Jesus knew each other and had probably attended at least a few family functions together.

But John knew Jesus, may have even played with Jesus and shared boyhood dreams with Jesus but he didn't really *know* Jesus. He didn't know him until it has been revealed to him by God. "Even I didn't recognize him," John said (v. 33), "but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit coming down and resting is the one who baptized with the Holy Spirit.'" It was God's grace that allowed John to see Jesus, really see him.

And it is that Grace, that Amazing Grace, that we see at the baptismal font; a Grace that claims us before we even know God's claim on our lives. At baptisms of children I remind worshipers that we love God because God first loved us. (I John 4: 19)

When John the Baptist saw Jesus after this revelation of Grace he told his disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." The two disciples who heard this began to follow Jesus, not as disciples, but at a distance out of curiosity, maybe. Jesus turned to them and asked what they were looking for. They replied with an idiom of the day, "where are you staying" which essentially means, "Who in the world are you?!" Jesus' response was breathtakingly simple. "Come and see." Walk in my dust. Follow me. Abide with me and let me abide—live—with you.

One of the disciples was a man named Andrew. He had a brother, Simon Peter. Andrew rushed to Simon Peter and said, "We have found the Messiah, the Christ, the Lord."

Isn't that our call; to respond to the amazing Grace of God in our baptism, confirmed at our confession and ratified again and again at the Sacred Table of Communion? Are not we called to go and invite others; tell them that we have found the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the World, the One who will make their life complete?

Jesus' invitation still echoes. Come and see. Go and serve, to the glory of God. Amen.