

John 1: 35-51
January 11/12, 2020
St. Mark Lutheran Church

Grace and peace to you from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

John the Baptist had a good thing going. He was in the wilderness baptizing people and preaching repentance and people were coming out to him in large numbers. We are told that the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were coming out to see him. But John knew that he had been called by God for a specific purpose, and that purpose was to point others to Jesus, the Messiah.

John had caused such a stir among the people of Jerusalem, that the Jews there sent a delegation of their religious leaders out to him to ask him who he was. They were concerned about this wild man out in the wilderness pulling people away from their own established religious practices. But even with these religious leaders, John did not take any credit for himself, but instead pointed them to the One who was to come. Jesus.

Even with his own disciples; men who had seen something valuable in what John was doing and had signed up to follow and work with him, John's goal was not to draw attention or credit to himself, but to point them to Jesus. The day after the religious leaders had visited John, John saw Jesus passing by and he immediately pointed him out to his followers, "Look the Lamb of God," he said. Guys, there's the One you should be following. Not me. He's the man. And he pointed his own followers to Jesus, the only One he knew could save them and give them what they were seeking.

Like John the Baptist, our calling here at St. Mark Lutheran Church is to point others to Jesus; plain and simple. Everything we do here, no matter what it is, should be done for the express purpose of pointing others to Jesus Christ and His forgiving, redeeming work in the lives of those who believe in Him. Just like John, our purpose is to point others to Jesus. Even the people we know well. As we experience success in our ministries here together, we should always be reminding each other of why we are here, not to take credit for ourselves, but to point each other to Jesus.

After John pointed Jesus out to his disciples, they went after Jesus and asked Him where He was staying. He told them to “come and see.” And so they followed Jesus and ended up spending the rest of the day with Him.

Note the progression here. Someone, John, first pointed the two men to Jesus. They sought out Jesus. Jesus invited them to “Come and See”, they did, and they were hooked. They became two of Jesus’ first disciples.

It worked the same way for each one of us. At some point in our lives someone, maybe a parent or grandparent, maybe a Sunday school teacher, maybe a friend or co-worker, someone pointed us toward Jesus. Through His Word, Jesus then invited us to come and see who He was and to discover His true identity for ourselves. And as we remained with Jesus, stayed with Jesus, learned more about Jesus, He showed us who He was and offered us life as only He can.

Now it’s important that we pay attention to what happened next. And I’m going to read it directly from Scripture, starting with verse 40.

“⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus.” Now listen to these words...”⁴¹ **The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ).**⁴² **And he brought him to Jesus.”**

What an important message that is for us today. After Jesus touched his life and called him to follow, the **FIRST THING** Andrew did was go and find his brother; **The FIRST THING**. His brother was so important to him that he wanted to make sure that he was a part of this whole experience.

How many of us have family members that haven’t yet met Jesus; people whom we love dearly and want to share eternity with. And yet how many of us are too afraid of offending them and so don’t invite them to “come and see”? How many of us are silent as we watch the people we love the most remain far away from Jesus, lost in the hopelessness and helplessness of sin. Even when we know that He is the only one who can save them and give them what they are seeking?

Don't wait another day. It's too important. Invite those you love to "Come and see." Invite them to come and meet Jesus for themselves. Invite them to see what Jesus can and will do in their lives. And don't stop after one invitation. Don't think that if you have asked them to attend worship with you one time you have done your duty. For some of our more stubborn family members it may take years, but don't give up. It's too important.

But it doesn't stop there. Inviting others to come and see Jesus doesn't stop with our family members. Listen to the rest of the story.

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

⁴⁴ Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael...Again look what happened...when Philip had an encounter with Jesus he immediately went out and found his friend Nathaniel. He didn't keep this good news to himself. He didn't keep his new found relationship with Jesus a secret. He went out and shared it

with someone important to him. Philip found Nathaniel and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

⁴⁶ “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked.

“Come and see,” said Philip.

Again, there are those words, that invitation to come and see. Philip didn’t argue with his friend Nathaniel when he asked him what good could come from Nazareth. He didn’t get into a theological debate with him. He didn’t try to explain what he believed about Jesus. He simply extended an invitation for Nathaniel to come and see for himself. And as he does, Jesus touches Nathaniel’s life and he is changed forever.

This is how the first disciples were made. They were invited to come and see, either by Jesus himself or by one of their friends. And as they responded to that invitation, they had a personal encounter with Jesus and their lives were forever changed.

Sometimes we try to make the disciple-making process, the process of evangelism, sound so complicated when it is really pretty simple. All we have to do is point others toward Jesus. All we have to do is invite people to “come and see” Jesus for themselves. Just like John did for his own followers. Just like Andrew did for his brother Simon Peter. Just like Philip did for Nathaniel. That’s something each one of us can do; extend an invitation for others to come and see.

Nothing beats the power of personal invitation because Christianity is such a personal faith. Jesus wants to have a personal relationship with each one of us; with each one of our family members, neighbors, friends, and co-workers. Not many will respond to a general invitation issued through a newspaper or Facebook ad or post card in the mail, although those methods have value too. Almost everyone will respond to a personal invitation from a friend or neighbor, family member or co-worker; from someone they know and trust.

Statistics show that 80% of all first-time visitors come to church because they were personally invited. That means each one of you plays

a vital role in reaching out and pointing others to Jesus. In reaching out and inviting someone you know, a family member, a coworker, a friend, to “come and see.” And as they come and see you can watch the Holy Spirit reach out and touch their lives with the truth of Jesus Christ.

And don't ever give up inviting. Many of you may have heard this story before, but when I graduated from college I shared an apartment with one of my co-workers. My roommate Kim was not a Christian and had never been to church before. Each Saturday night, for over a year, I asked Kim if she would like to go to church with me the next morning. Each Saturday night for over a year Kim said no. And then, finally one Saturday night I asked the usual question expecting the usual answer, but on that night Kim said yes. Kim started attending church with me that next morning and continued attending with me every Sunday after that. Soon Kim went to speak the pastor about being baptized. What a day that was when Kim was baptized. God had done a great work in her heart and life.

What would have happened if I had stopped asking her after that first Saturday night? I don't doubt that God could have still worked in Kim's life. But what if I had grown discouraged and had stopped inviting Kim to "come and see"? I would have failed to do my part of pointing someone to Jesus.

Each of us has someone in our lives that hasn't met Jesus. I encourage each one of you to begin today to identify those people in your life and start pointing. Start inviting. Don't assume that someone else will invite them. Don't assume that they know they're invited.

Recently someone told me about a neighbor of theirs who every Sunday morning invited them to go golfing with him. Every time the reply was no, we have church. Well, the day came when this neighbor was moving away and came to say goodbye to them. As he said goodbye he mentioned that it was too bad that they had never gone golfing with him. The person telling me the story had replied that it was too bad the neighbor had never gone to church with them. Do you know what the neighbor said? His response was "You never asked me to."

My friends, how many people are out there that we've never bothered to ask; to invite; to point to Jesus? Start today, pointing the people you care about towards Jesus; telling them "There is the One who can change your life." Start inviting the people who share your life to "come and see." And then watch as Jesus, Himself, meets them where they are and changes their life forever. Amen.