

John 1:35-51

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said to him, "Here is truly and Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Sermon

We are the little church in the wildwood! We have a mission to prepare and send Spirit-filled disciples who walk with Christ into the world to glorify God. And we believe that we go nowhere by accident.

Reverend Richard Halverson was a presbyterian pastor and he served as the Senate Chaplain from 1981 until 1994. One of the things he was known for, both in his parish life and ministry in the Senate, was his benediction. No matter what else happened in the worship service, what songs were sung, what prayers were shared - in the end, he wanted people to remember their missional purpose. "You go nowhere by accident... God has a purpose in your being there." It was this benediction that caught the attention of members of White Lick Presbyterian and it has been the consistent benediction ever since. And, over the decade plus of us closing our worship in this same way, Halverson's benediction has moved from words on a page to words we know by heart. It has moved from something to think about to something to live by, something to believe in. "Christ has something He wants to do through you, where you are." Purpose, mission, call and send, the words have become a piece of our identity.

Jesus had just been baptized by John the Baptist. The next day he comes back out to the crowd that John was gathering, only this time John points to Jesus and proclaims "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" It was then that two of John's disciples overhear John's words and take them to mean that they should now follow Jesus. I imagine this interaction as something pretty awkward. (Walking along, looking over shoulder...). "Um, What are you looking for?"... (looking at one another). "Um, Where are you staying?" ... "Come and see, I guess." But within John's gospel, we find something with pretty deep meaning. "Where are you staying" has a double meaning. At the surface, it simply means, where are you living right now, where is your home or the room/house you are staying. But the questions also asks, "Where do you abide". What do you stand for, what is your purpose, your mission, your identity? Are you really the Lamb of God like John said? Where do you abide?... And Jesus simply invites them to come and see.

Then the very next day, Jesus finds Philip and calls him to "Follow me." And when Philip runs to tell his brother about Jesus, Nathanael is a bit skeptical. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" And what is Philip's response? "Come and see." I'm not going to try to convince you of something you might be skeptical of. I'm not going to push you into faith. I'm not going to tell you "It's either Jesus or hell!" because fear is not a good motivation for long term commitment. Come with your fears and your doubts, come with your questions and your skepticism. Come not fully having the answers, but still looking, seeking, wondering. Come and see if anything good can come out of Nazareth.

And the two disciples of John, come and see where Jesus' abides, and Andrew tells Simon, and Jesus tells Simon, "You will be called Cephas, Peter, the rock." The next day, Philip tells his brother Nathanael to come and see if anything good can come from Nazareth and Jesus tell Nathanael, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." Come and see!

And it makes sense. We all have that person in our life that likes to try to explain every single detail about a project, teaching us with words, and words, and words - to the point that we can't keep it all together. But if someone takes the time to show us how to do something, if we can get on youtube and see someone doing what we need to do, then suddenly we understand. No matter how much of an auditory learner you are, a picture is still worth a thousand words, and a demonstration is amazing.

And so it is with a church. I can ask you to go out into our neighborhoods and communities and go tell people all about who White Lick is. Tell them what are identity is, explain how our worship services go, what are theology is, or what it is like to talk around tables after worship. Or, we could go out into our neighborhoods and communities and share with our brothers and sisters an invitation, "Come and see!" God is doing great things at White Lick, my faith is grown, my heart and mind are nourished, and I am called into the world with joy. "Come and see where we abide! Come and see if anything good can come from a small country church! Come and see if God's purpose is for you to be with us so that together we might glorify God!"

God has a purpose for you and for me. And God has a purpose for those that we meet along the way. "You go nowhere by accident." We have found our purpose intersected with the people of this Congregation. But who else is God calling to worship and work beside us? I do not know, but I have faith that they are just waiting to be asked. "Believe this and go in His Spirit's grace and love and power."