

Come and See

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[0 : 00] Well, it's good to see you all this morning. Glad you could join us both in person and on the live stream. You know, I've been rearranging my house a little bit these days, which has been great.

And I came across an envelope that I got from a friend of mine this summer. And the envelope contained a series of letters that I wrote back in 1986 as I was in the process of coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

I had grown up hearing of Jesus. I had heard his name and read some Bible stories, but I never understood him. I was, in fact, blinded by my misunderstanding of who he was.

And I was not a follower of him. In fact, I dismissed him and wanted to live my own way. Anyway, my junior year in high school, some of you have been around for Trinity.

You've heard this story before. But through conversations with friends and then reading through some C.S. Lewis, particularly Mere Christianity, I came to understand who Jesus was.

[1 : 11] And it was really fun to read through these letters again this week and to see my 17-year-old self expressing the joy of finally and fully coming to understand who Jesus was and hearing his call to respond to him, to take my life and to follow him with all that I was.

And I knew what that looked like because I had these friends who had shown me what that looks like as I had gotten to know them. The thrill of understanding and living in light of the greatness of Jesus was pretty awesome.

As I read them as well, I was also reflecting on the fact that it's easy now, many years later, to lose that thrill and that joy and that awe.

It's easy for Jesus to become familiar. That if my experience of Jesus before I came to faith was that of misunderstanding and therefore not really rejoicing in it, how easy it is now for familiarity to also similarly blind me to his greatness and dull my heart so that I don't respond.

I don't know about you this morning. Maybe you're here seeking to understand Jesus for the first time. Maybe you've known about him for a long time but have not actually found the joy of knowing him.

[2 : 47] Maybe you've been going to church for a long time but familiarity and time have made it stale. Wherever you're at this morning, our passage comes and invites us this morning to look again at Jesus anew.

We're continuing in our series in the Gospel of John. We're looking at John chapter 1 starting in verse 35. If you have that at home or here, you can look at it on your phone or in your Bible.

We're going to read it together. Then I'm going to pray and then we will dive in. All right. So John chapter 1. And just to give us a little bit of context as we're diving in, Pastor Nick preached last week on verses 1 through 18, this grand prologue, this very, in some ways, almost philosophical depiction of who Jesus was.

The Word became flesh. And here, after that, what we see is that the Apostle John begins to tell the story of what that looked like on earth, how the Word became flesh on earth.

The end of chapter 1 and then in chapter 2, Jesus begins His ministry. So that's where we're at in the Gospel of John. Let's read our passage together. John chapter 1, verse 35.

[4 : 12] The next day, again, John was standing with two of his disciples. And he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, Behold, the Lamb of God.

The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned, saw them following, and said to them, What are you seeking?

And they said to him, Rabbi, which means teacher, Where are you staying? And he said to them, Come, and you will see. So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.

One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother, Simon, and said to him, We have found the Messiah, which means Christ.

He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, So you are Simon, the son of John? You shall be called Cephas, which means Peter. The next day, Jesus decided to go to Galilee.

[5 : 20] 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 of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

Nathanael said to him, Can anything good come of Nazareth? And Philip said to him, Come and see. And Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit.

And Nathanael said to him, How do you know me? Jesus answered him, Before Philip called you, When you were under the fig tree, I saw you. Nathanael answered him, Rabbi, you are the son of God.

You are the king of Israel. And Jesus answered him, Because I saw you, Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, Do you believe?

You will see greater things than these. And he said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, You will see heaven opened, And the angels of God ascending and descending On the son of man.

[6 : 41] Will you pray with me? Lord, as we look at this passage this morning, Lord, we pray that you would open our eyes. Lord, that we would see you, Jesus, As you truly are.

That we would see you as this passage reveals you to be. That we would see you as our king and our glory. Lord, we pray that you would help us to see you.

And as we see you, Lord, Will you turn our hearts towards you In adoration, in worship. Lord, I pray for your help this morning. Will you give me your words to speak.

Lord, and may you bless each of us Through the preaching of your word. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So, friends, as we come to this, It's always good to remember That when we read the Gospels, That it's a narrative.

It's a story. And it's built like a story. And this story is built in a fairly simple way. There is a setting in verses 35 and 36 Where John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus, Which is that he's the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world, Remembering the Passover and other places in the Old Testament Where atonement for sin comes through the sacrifice of a lamb.

[8 : 09] And so, in the setup, it just reminds us of that. It doesn't expound on it. And we're not going to spend a ton of time on it today. But it starts there. And then it launches into these two stories, These two accounts of people, The first disciples encountering Jesus.

First, we have Andrew and probably the Apostle John, Who wrote this Gospel. Andrew and John following Jesus. And then Andrew coming and bringing his brother Peter to come with him.

And what that, and the interaction that they have with Jesus. And then in verses 43 through 50, You have the next day in a different place, Jesus calling Philip, And Philip bringing his friend Nathaniel, And their encounter with Jesus.

And then in verse 51, There's a final pronouncement. And it looks like it might simply be a normal part of the end of that conversation. But in fact, for two reasons, I think it stands out as John's summary statement That would stand out to us.

First, because Jesus says, Amen, amen. In this ESV, it says, Truly, truly, I say to you, Jesus is giving, saying, Pay attention to this. What I'm about to say is really important.

[9 : 22] And then when he says, I say to you, You will see heaven opened and the angels of God descending. Those you's are no longer singular.

The rest of the narrative says that he's talking to Nathaniel. And then in verse 51, It changes to talking to all of you. And all of us. And the gospel writer, John, Wants us to see that verse 51 is the capstone of this narrative arc.

And in fact, a critical piece. So having said that, This passage is about this invitation to come and see. Jesus invites Andrew and John, Come and see.

Philip invites Nathaniel, Come and see. What is it that the gospel writer, John, Wants us to see in this passage? He wants us to see, first, how others see Jesus.

He wants to see, second, how Jesus sees others. And third, how Jesus wants us to see him. All right? So we're going to work through those.

[10 : 29] How others see Jesus is the first thing that the apostle wants us to see. And one of the things that's striking as you read through this passage is the number of times when Jesus gets put a label or a title on him.

I'm just going to run through them really quickly so we can see how clearly. Verse 36, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We've already talked about this as a reference to the Passover and the sacrificial system.

Verse 38, Andrew says to him, You are rabbi. That means teacher. An honored one. A spiritual leader. Who in those days people would literally pick up their life and follow someone in order to be taught by them.

And then in verse 41, as Andrew's talking to Peter, he says, We found the Messiah, the Christ. John transliterates it for his Greek-speaking Jewish audience of this book.

And he says, The Messiah, which means Christ, which means anointed one. And this imagery of the anointed one would arouse in the Jewish mind, the king and the priest who would serve in the temple and serve in the capital and who would rule over God's people.

[11 : 47] The descendant of David, that the Jewish people were longing to come and rule and reign over his people. And then we see in verse 45, as Philip is saying, Nathanael, you've got to come see this guy.

He says, This is the one of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote. He is the fulfillment of all the things that we've heard. Those are sort of summary statements that say the whole Old Testament, from beginning to end, is pointing towards something.

And we think this is the thing, this is the person, in fact, that it all points to. The one who will come and restore God's kingdom, bring the abundance and fullness of his love and provision, who will establish peace and restore hope to his people.

And he says, This one that the whole Old Testament, he's this particular guy. He's this dude. He's Jesus from Nazareth, the town up the way, who's the son of Joseph, the carpenter, who may have built your table.

And he locates this grand promise in this very particular person. And John is helping us see, this is the word became flesh.

[13 : 04] This is the second person of the Trinity who was God and was with God in a human body, who lived in the town next door. And finally, in verse 49, as Nathanael interacts with Jesus, Jesus reveals himself as being one with supernatural power.

Nathanael says, You are the son of God. You are the king of Israel. Not someone who had come from Nazareth, by the way.

Nathanael looks at him and he says, You're the promised one. You're the one we've been looking for. And John writes this gospel.

Here's the amazing thing. You read this and you get the sense that none of these people fully understood what they were reading and what they were saying when they gave Jesus these titles.

None of them understood who they were really talking to. None of them had this fullness of the word of God made flesh. John is writing to say, There's just this beginning.

[14 : 11] And these people spoke better than they knew. Better than they knew of who Jesus was. Because the gospel writer is saying, I'm going to set this up for you and now I'm going to give you 20 chapters, 21 chapters, so that you understand who this one is.

that in his life and ministry, in his death and atoning sacrifice, in his resurrection and victory over sin and death, these titles all foretell how and who Jesus is going to fully be as the Savior of the world.

These titles are like black and white sketches that then the rest of the gospel fills in with color so that we understand him. And the overall effect of it is this.

The one who you've been waiting for has come. Don't delay. Don't get distracted. Don't miss this. He is here. Come and see this Jesus. Come and spend time with him.

Come and ask him the questions you need to ask. Jesus invites the disciples. Come. Come and stay with me. Come and follow me. Come and see my greatness.

[15 : 21] Friends, do you see Jesus this morning? Like this. Do you hear his invitation in your life?

Whether you're exploring or have known him for a long time, he says, come and see. See him in all his majesty. He knows you don't understand it all.

Who would? He's the God of the universe. Become flesh. It'll take us a lifetime to seek to understand. And still, we will continue to grow. He knows that the spiritual words and the terms that we use of him will continue to mean more and more as we go along in our lives.

But he says, come. Come and see the greatness of who I am. This is the most important thing you will ever know. This is the most important thing you will ever encounter. And following him and finding him will be the greatest joy of your life.

And this is Jesus. He invites us to explore it. To explore his glory. I remember the opportunities I had when I worked in Campus Ministry to go to Colorado every other summer and go to Rocky Mountain National Park.

[16 : 33] And the first time you drive through Rocky Mountain National Park, it's awesome. Right? It's absolutely majestic. And you go up through the road that goes through the whole thing. And it's just, it's breathtaking.

But you know what I found because I had the opportunity to stay there for a number of weeks is that the glory of it just continued to increase as I found different hiking trails and different paths and climbed different peaks and got to different mountain valleys.

And the beauty and the glory and the majesty only increased as I explored it more and more. And this is what Jesus is meant to be for us. And this is what John is saying that he's lifting up.

This is the one who you should spend your time worshiping and glorifying. I want to step for just a second.

Pastor Nick alluded to this in his prayer. One of the pastoral concerns that I've had over the last week as I've been reading the news is that some of our national discussion about politics have had very, very strong religious overtones.

[17 : 44] I'm concerned that the name of Jesus has been co-opted for political ends in our country. I think there is confusion in the broad society and maybe even in the church about how we understand politics in the kingdom of God and how they interact.

When you read the accounts of the crowd that ended up becoming a riot and I can't we're not going to start with broad strokes there was clear evidence that many people there not all but many people there were carrying signs that says Jesus saves.

They were having sing-alongs to Our God Reigns. One of the protesters who was in the capital said I had to get in there to plead the blood of Jesus inside the capital.

Friends this use of biblical verses and apocalyptic imagery for political agendas reveals that some have put their hope in politics and in political leaders and have adopted a religious fervor about politics.

And we must be clear that the Jesus that John lifts up in his gospel is greater than that. Neither Donald Trump nor Joe Biden will save us.

[19 : 23] No political party has the power to rescue our nation or our country. Nor do they have the ability to destroy it. We cannot put our hope in human systems and human structures.

And look I know that in this room and in our congregation virtually people have supported different parties different candidates and there can be good reasons to do so.

But we cannot say that one of them has the imprint and the blessing of Jesus Christ at the expense of the other one because Jesus is above these things.

And when we see that clearly when Jesus is our king and when Jesus reigns over the world we are then free friends to engage in politics to engage in seeking to bring righteousness and justice to bring light and hope to address the evils of our day from a biblical standpoint to speak to these things we have a freedom to know that ultimately those things will not be transformed because of politics or because of the person who is sitting in the White House but because of the power of God and the redeemer who sits on the throne in heaven over all things for all time and who will one day come and establish his kingdom.

Jesus alone is our savior and king who calls us to follow him. He is the one who won his victory by dying for us in humility and weakness.

[21 : 07] He is the one worth dying for and worth living for and all other allegiances must be secondary. And the kingdom that he builds is not a kingdom of this world but it is a kingdom of a people from every tongue tribe and nation called the church.

And I say this because I want the clarity of Jesus' glory to be the greatest focus of our lives and for us to not confuse and not conflate politics and political leaders and political agendas.

And when I read in the media today there are a lot of people who are confused about that. But John the Apostle says come and see.

Come and see what kind of savior he is here. Come and see and as he unfolds the gospel come and see with a woman in Samaria. Come and see with Nicodemus. Come and see with the lepers.

Come and see with a blind man. Come and see with the priests and the scribes. Come and see with his mourning friends and the adoring crowds and his disciples who are stumbling and fumbling and failing as they don't fully understand him and yet they stay with him.

[22 : 28] Come and see Jesus through their eyes. That's not going to work.

Come and see Jesus as others see him as the first thing that John wants us to do. The second thing that John wants us to see is how Jesus sees others and by extension us.

It's kind of striking. The narrative structure if you look at these two narratives one with Andrew and Peter and one with Philip and Nathaniel is ending with this person being invited to come and interact with Jesus and Jesus interacts with them in a particular way.

He sees them in a way that transforms them. Simon comes in and Jesus says who are you? Oh you're Simon son of what is it?

John. Simon son of John. Now I see who I'm going to make you to be. I'm going to make you Cephas which means Peter. And we know from other places this means the rock.

[23 : 39] This is he's seeing what Jesus will do. And one of the things you need to know is John's audience would have known exactly who Peter was. Because he was one of the most famous Christians in the first century.

Everyone would have known the apostle Peter the bishop of Rome. And therefore John doesn't have to say anything about him. He's like you know how this turned out. He became the one that Jesus saw that he was going to be.

In fact Jesus made him the man that he was going to be. The focus here is on a Jesus who knows people thoroughly and doesn't only see into the future to see what they will become.

But he so calls them that he makes them what he calls them to be. And then in Nathaniel as Nathaniel comes to Jesus Jesus looks at him and says behold an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.

Jesus looks at this man and he says well here's someone who is of the tribe of Israel. And there's a reference here and we'll come back to why we get here because you'll see at the end verse 51 is going to be very strongly attached to the story of Jacob in Genesis.

[24 : 59] But here Jesus looks at Nathaniel and says you know what the people of Israel one of their patriarchs was Jacob and he was a deceiver but you are one in whom there is no deceit.

You are actually one of Israel. That is those who follow the God who sees. And Nathaniel is transformed by that comment.

Isn't it striking? Now Nathaniel also says how do you know me? And Jesus says well I saw you. And this seeing obviously was supernatural.

It was not physical. It wasn't like Jesus peeked around the corner and said I'm going to get this guy. You know this is not a charlatan with some smoke and mirrors. Jesus had an understanding of where Nathaniel was that could only be because of his deity.

I believe that's what the implication of this passage is. And Nathaniel says wow you saw me even before you could see me with your eyes.

[26 : 14] And you see me as someone in whom there is no deceit. And in these things he then responds. He says wow you are God.

You are the son of God. You are the king of Israel. You are the one that Philip told me about. And the cynic becomes a believer in the instant that he encounters Jesus.

and friends the beautiful thing about it is that Jesus looks at us as well. And he sees us not as he hopes we will be nor does he see us as we try to be but he sees us as he will make us to be.

he sees us and he knows that in his calling of us to himself he is going to bring a transforming power whereby because of union with him he is going to make us new and he sees the woman and the man that we will become because of his power at work in us.

and this is an amazing thing. Jesus' vision of us has transforming power.

[27 : 31] Friends if you encounter Jesus like this not just about what you know of him but do you know what it's like for him to know you?

Do you know his redemptive power? Revealing himself to you in such a way that you respond that your heart changes that you fall down and worship that you forsake other things to follow him that you call him God's chosen one.

So John has shown us what other people see in Jesus with this list of titles. John has shown us what Jesus sees in other people through his redemptive eyes but finally in verse 51 John wants us to see how Jesus intends for us to see him.

Let's look at these verses again. The end of the narrative Jesus answers Nathanael and says because I said to you I saw you under the fig tree do you believe? You will see greater things than these.

You will see greater things than these. This supernatural vision that I've had of you that could only be because I'm God is only the beginning of what you're going to see.

[28 : 56] And then he shifts gears in verse 51 and he said to him truly truly truly I say to you you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man.

And every Jew who heard that story would know oh he's talking about Jacob. In Genesis 28 verses 12 through 17 18 the patriarch who had deceived his father into receiving his blessing and now was fleeing for his life from his home and while he's out in the wilderness he lay down put his head on a stone and fell asleep.

In Genesis 28 it says this starting in verse 12 and he that is Jacob dreamed and behold there was a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached to heaven and behold the angels of God were ascending and descending on it and behold the Lord stood above it and said I am the Lord the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south and in you and in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed behold I am with you and will keep you to this land for I will not leave you until I have done what I promised you and then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it and he was afraid and he said how awesome is this place there is none other this is none other than the house of

God and this is the gate of heaven so this well known story of the patriarch Jacob having this vision this dream of a ladder and we usually think of an extension ladder that we sort of throw up on the side of our house this is not a good vision for us I want you to think of a Babylonian pyramid with a staircase going up one side that has layers and levels and the stairs go up and up and it was built like the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 it was built because there was this idea that you could somehow create a connection between heaven and earth by creating this ladder or this staircase or this temple so God takes this picture and he plants it in the mind of Jacob and he says this is really what's going on I am creating a place where heaven and earth will meet the gate of heaven and he comes and he says

Jacob you are the one who is the fulfillment of the promises of the covenant that I've made to Abraham and Isaac I will make your people great and I will bless the whole world and I will make my glory known through all of you and Jacob receives all this and he says this is where the Lord is this is the gate of heaven and I'm going to call this place Bethel which means the house of God the place where man and God where humans men and women can meet with God a place where a sinful deceiver could be welcomed by God himself and what Jesus says to Nathaniel and to Philip and to Andrew and to us I'm the one I am the son of man upon whom the angels are descending and ascending I am the gate to heaven I am the place where God dwells I am the way do you want to get to

[32 : 48] God I'm the way that you're going to be able to do it he uses his title son of man that would have probably not been super clear to the disciples and he's going to fill in all the meaning of that as he lives his life and death and resurrection and ascension says I am the one where you can meet God I am the one who can show you the way to heaven this is the savior that we were looking for and he invites us to come and see and friends we know the rest of the story just as many of the readers of John's gospel would have we know that Jesus lived a life of miraculous power of great humility and weakness he lived a life of love and he brought foretastes of the kingdom of God as he overcame the effects of sin and death and at the end of his life he offered himself up on the cross as a sacrifice and a substitute for our sin dying in our place so that we might no longer live in death and darkness separate from

God without access to him but that through the cross and through his resurrection we now actually have by faith in Christ access to God himself this is the word made flesh dwelling and living in this earth among people John says and I write all of this so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name friends if you don't have life in Jesus name this morning I invite you come and notice too how often just as it was true for me with my friends Billy and Becky John and Kim and others how often we come to see Jesus through one another and if we do know Jesus we don't have to explain him to people we don't have to beat people over the head with who he is we don't have to destroy we don't have to argue people into the kingdom we can just say come come and see come and see this

Jesus we can invite others to see what we see the great savior the one we've been waiting for the one in whom we have access to God I'm going to pray in just a minute I don't know maybe some of you this morning are hearing Jesus invitation to come to him in faith this morning like Nathaniel maybe you have heard something that has sparked in your heart belief maybe some of you are sparked to explore further I would love to talk with you I'm sure the other pastors or maybe your friend who invited you to church can talk to you about it more and for those of us who have seen Jesus for many many years may we be refreshed and renewed in how glorious and awesome he is how

John the apostle sketched this story so that we might be reminded of the greatness of Jesus and find joy in him so let's pray together Lord we pray this morning Lord we pray this morning that you would by your spirit help us to see you Jesus as you truly are Lord to see us ourselves as we truly are lost without you Lord I pray for those who you may be working in this morning prompting them to place their faith in Jesus and to say yes I will follow him I believe he is the son of God the only savior the way to heaven the way to know God Lord I pray Lord right now that they would pray this prayer Lord confessing their sin asking you to be their savior and their Lord Lord

I pray for many others Lord as we continue to seek to know you better Lord will you open our eyes Lord help us not to be distracted by the many things in our lives that prevent us from spending time with you and Lord we pray that you would show us if there are ways in our heart places in our hearts where our love for you and our allegiance to you has been turned aside to other things Lord that we would follow you alone God I pray you would restore our joy in knowing you today Lord we pray all these things in Jesus name Amen