

Come and See  
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I want to invite you to open your Bibles to the fourth book of the New Testament, John. Its original subtitle was "According to John." Over the years, with more clarity, it has now been called "The Gospel According to John." This is the good news of Jesus. John's Gospel especially shows us that Jesus is God and that God has come to this world. We began last week in this journey through the 21 chapters of John.

Here's what I am realizing as we handle this book of John. The Gospel of John seems to me to be a 21 chapter invitation. Somewhere in your house, maybe you have a family bulletin board where you put invitations that come. Usually these are a single card that invite us to birthday parties or anniversary parties or wedding events. Every one of those cards always comes with some kind of built-in expectation. That built-in expectation is that we will respond. John's Gospel is like that. It is a 21 chapter invitation, and in every chapter there seems to be this growing and this building expectation that we're going to respond to Jesus Christ. Last week, we looked in chapter 1 of the Gospel, it was some pretty heavy stuff. I felt like it was work. There is a lot there. When you work through these verses of chapter 1, you see that Jesus existed before creation began, Jesus was with God, and Jesus made it all and Jesus is God and Jesus took on flesh. There is a gradual building that shows the uniqueness of who Jesus is. We stopped in verse 34. You would think that the last part of this chapter is just going to keep getting heavier and heavier thicker and thicker. And by the time you get to verse 35, individual people are responding to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

John is writing and looking back at the events that unfolded here. The initial response to who Jesus was that people followed Him. I guess we've heard it so much, and the Gospel is so familiar to us on a Sunday morning in Watkinsville Georgia that we can almost pass it off and ignore its magnitude. John's Gospel shows us Jesus. For 21 chapters, John is saying, "Come and see." He wants us to come and see Jesus. I want to hold up this Gospel of John and say to you as a teenager or an adult - you may have heard it all your life. In fact, you may have stacks of Bibles in your house, and the great dilemma is which one to grab on your way out the door. John's words in his Gospel beg us not to lose the wonder and the amazement. Don't lose the supernatural view of who Jesus is. Come and see! When he invites people to come and see, here's what happens. People follow Him. People see in Jesus that He is what their soul needs. John promises it in His word. He says, "You will have life abundantly." You will even live beyond death! That's what Jesus can do with your life!

Look at it in John chapter 1 picking up in verse 35. It seems here that John the Baptist is casually announcing Jesus.

**"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!"**

Just let your imagination work a little bit. John had been announcing Him, and he looked up and saw Jesus! The only thing he could say was, "Behold, the Lamb of God." I don't want to exaggerate. I don't want to read more into what we have in black and white here on the page. But it's hard for me to believe that a man who was clothed in animal skins who ate locusts and honey out in the wilderness would see Jesus and just say, "Well, there He goes." There's something about it that makes me think that with lips tensed and teeth showing, he would be reaching out to people saying, "Behold! The Lamb of God!"

He said it loud enough and he pointed clearly enough for two of the people that had been following him to hear him and look and notice. John became less, and Jesus became more when two of his followers left him and started following Jesus. Let's pick up again in verse 37:

**"The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, 'What are you seeking?' And they said to him, 'Rabbi' (which means Teacher), 'where are you staying?'"**

That's an interesting question. Jesus sees them following Him and Jesus doesn't ask, "Who are you following?" or "What are you doing?" but instead asks, "What are you seeking?" These are penetrating questions - "What's in your heart?"; "What's on your mind?"; "What are you wrestling with?"; "What are you seeking?" I love their answer back. They say, "Where are you staying?" That makes me laugh. I'm trying to picture it through my own experience. He asks them, "What are you seeking?" And they are thinking, "He wants to know what's in my heart? He wants to know what's going on in my mind? We're going to need some time." Jesus says these words that will later be repeated in an evangelistic way by others. He said to them:

**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, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).**

There is a pattern being established where they are asked to come and see, but then they are told to go and tell. They come and see Jesus, they spend time with Him, they learn about Him, and then go and tell somebody else. Verse 43 says, **"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."** What we find here in these verses is that five guys respond to Jesus. They responded by following this Jesus.

Verse 45: **"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 out of Nazareth?'"** It was a scornful reply. Nathanael was from Cana.

People in Cana looked down on Nazareth. But people from like Galilee looked at Cana and said, "I don't want to live in Cana."

It is just like we do. I remember when we first moved to Cleveland, Tennessee and were expecting our first child. There was a hospital in Chattanooga up the interstate. There was a hospital there in Athens, Tennessee and a hospital there in Cleveland as well. So when we were expecting our first child, we started talking to people about where we were going to have our baby. People in Cleveland would say, "Oh, we go to Chattanooga to have our babies. We don't have babies here in Cleveland." Then the next week, I met somebody from Athens, Tennessee just up the interstate past Cleveland. I told them we were expecting a baby. They said, "We go to Cleveland to have our babies. We don't have babies in Athens." It was an example of how we look at certain places in certain ways.

So Nathanael is thinking to himself, "The Messiah? From Nazareth? Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

Beginning again in verse 47: **"Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!'"** Jesus saw his heart. He knew who he was. When he said, **"an Israelite in whom there is no deceit,"** some people believe that is a direct reference to Jacob from the Old Testament who would later be named "Israel." Jacob was known for his trickery. Jesus was making a play on words. One translator says that this verse could say, "Behold, a Jacob in whom there is no deceit." He's saying that there is nothing false in Nathanael.

Verse 48: **Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?"** Isn't it intriguing how Jesus knows us? Jesus knows you. He knows you. I may not know you. Your children may not know you. Your neighbor may not you. But Jesus knows Nathanael. In verse 48, Nathanael asks,

**"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!" Jesus answered him, "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."**

I want you to see that there is one response to this invitation to come and see. The one response is to follow him. We sang about Jesus this morning, and we talk about Him every week. When we read His word from Genesis to Revelation, it's the story of Jesus. John wrote these 21 chapters inviting us to come and see to believe that He is the Christ, to believe that He's the Son of God, and by believing we will have life. The response to coming and seeing Jesus for these five guys, regardless of how they wound up getting to Him, was to follow him. John is laying out that this response of coming and seeing and following is the goal. So I want to ask you as you read about these five guys written in God's word to put your name there. Then, ask this question: are you following Jesus? As a seventh grader, are you following Jesus? As a 70 year old, are you following Jesus? As a mom, are you following Jesus?

Following Jesus is believing Jesus. It is serving Jesus. It is spending time with Jesus. It is obeying Jesus. It is praying like Jesus prayed. It is loving like Jesus loved. When we follow Jesus over time, we look at our lives and we are being transformed to be more like Jesus. When you spend time with people, you become like them. If you're following Jesus, do you know what's going to happen in your life? If you have been following Jesus since you were a teenager, then in your twenties, in your thirties, in your forties, if you're following Jesus, you'll start looking more like Jesus. You'll start living more like Jesus. You'll start loving more like Jesus. You'll start serving more like Jesus.

Why not follow Him today? Jesus is the Son of God, and no one ever existed like Him. No one ever was born like Him. No one ever lived like Him. No one ever died for the reasons that He died. No one was ever risen back to life like Jesus was risen back to life. No one ever will come back like Jesus will come back. Come and see. Why not today? Maybe you are thinking, "I've been here. I've heard it. I know this stuff. I know the story." But why not today? Wherever you've been going, wherever you've been heading, whatever direction you've been in, follow Him today! Maybe that's the very purpose for God to bring you into this room today - so that it could be the marker moment in your life where you came and saw. For years you've been coming and seeing, but today maybe for the first time, you will come and see and walk away from here following Jesus with your whole heart.

What happens when you follow Christ? If you come and see and you're following Jesus, do you know what it turns into? It turns into go and tell. That happens in this passage where those who come and follow Jesus go and tell others so they will come and see. That's the practical picture for you and I - one of the great evidences in our lives that we are following Jesus is that we talk to other people about Him. I know if you have children, don't I? I know if I'm around you what your hobbies are. We know those things, because when we love someone, we talk about them. All of us know the experience of getting around a grandfather, because we know we're going to see some pictures. One of the evidences that we have come to Jesus and we are following Him and that we love Him is that we go and tell.

Let me give you four statements about coming and seeing and going and telling. One of the pieces of our Going Challenge is that we build a stronger culture of prayer and evangelism. We want going and telling to be a part of our everyday life - that we're so in love with Jesus, we're so crazy about Jesus, we're so following Jesus that we want to go get some other people. Family members, friends, neighbors - we want to bring them to follow Jesus. Let me give you some principles that come right out of this about coming and seeing and going telling.

Number one: God has plans for you. You see this in this passage of Scripture when Jesus sees Philip, Andrew, and John. He has plans for them. John the Baptist - there was a plan for him to announce who Jesus is. Simon Peter is renamed as Cephas. He went from being Simon son of John to being called Cephas, the rock. It was an initial predictive naming of Simon Peter that something big was ahead for him in the building and the growing of the New Testament church. He had plans for Simon Peter. God has plans for you. You may think, "I'm 14 years old," or "I'm 44 years old," or "I'm 66 years old." I'm telling you - God has plans for you.

The second thing: God's plan for you is to bring people to Him that He has plans for. Think about that. God has plans for you. God's plan for you is to bring people to Him that he has plans for. Andrew is mentioned in the New Testament in three different stories. Some of you know this story, and for some of you, it is brand-new to you. The same thing that Andrew did in all three of those stories was that he brought somebody to Jesus. That's who he was! When Andrew meets Jesus and he comes and sees Jesus, what's the next thing he did? In verse 41, we see that the first thing he did: "He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah.'"

God had plans for Andrew to bring people to Jesus that Jesus had plans for. The way that Simon Peter got to Jesus was through Andrew. And when Simon Peter got to Jesus through Andrew, Jesus didn't say anything to Andrew. Instead, he said to Peter, "Here are the plans I have for you. I'm renaming you, and this new name tells a lot about your future." That kind of thing happens over and over again in your life. As a teenager, God has saved you, and you've come to Him and seen Him. And the very work that He wants to do in your life is for you to go get your brother, your sister, your parents, your classmate, or your teammate and bring them to come and see Jesus! Because God's got an incredible plan that He wants to do in that friend's life. It's amazing to me to see what God does through Watkinsville. I don't think they'll ever be a day in our world where the world is celebrating Watkinsville First Baptist Church in the headlines. That is not we're in it for. But this is what I've seen over and over again. God is using us to reach people that God has plans for. This has gripped my heart. I hope somehow through the power the Holy Spirit that it will grip your heart. God is doing some things for the people that He is reaching here that goes way beyond anything that will ever happen right here.

Can I give you three examples real quick? A girl named Gretchen came here as a college student. Day one as a freshman, she started attending Watkinsville. Every Wednesday night in our home, she was meeting with Carla in the college girls Bible study. She was very involved in different ministries of our church. She graduated and left here, saying goodbye. She moved to Tennessee and was an intern at a church in Tennessee with a women's ministry. She left there with her husband to help plant a church in Knoxville, Tennessee. In Knoxville, Tennessee God birthed in her heart something that He had been stirring there for a long time. She began a ministry that is now called Well Watered Women. Some of you may have already been a part of that ministry. This is a college girl who came through here!

Several months after Gretchen was married, she set out to start an online women's ministry with a vision of reaching women worldwide. Having no idea where to start, she began right where she was with what she had. She had a small amount of money in savings, and an idea for a prayer journal with big dreams stirring deep within her soul to encourage women to love Jesus deeply. Through a series of God ordained circumstances, the very first Give Me Jesus Journal was launched in May 2014. It was the original quiet time journal for women. The initial batch of journals sold out within an hour. In that moment, God defined the vision and mission of Well Watered Women to equip women to be rooted deeply in God's word. And over the following years, women from all over the world have purchased from the Well Watered Women shop and joined this online community.

The Well Watered team has expanded as well in order to better equip women with these Gospel centered resources. What began as a small seed, God has grown into a mighty oak tree and planted for His glory. If you went to her social media page you'd see that Gretchen has about 10,000 followers. There was a time where God used us in the life of Gretchen because God had plans for Gretchen.

Let me tell you about another. A girl named Becca came through here. It was the same story - she spent four years here at Watkinsville, and she moved to Atlanta. In Atlanta a few years ago, she and her husband began a ministry call Blueprint 58. "Blueprint 58 is a community-based mentor and program in the Adair Park and Pittsburgh neighborhoods of Atlanta. Blueprint 58 is unique in its approach to community development, by focusing on both fostering mentoring relationships through the local school and establishing a healthy and positive presence in the neighborhood. Blueprint 58 was birthed from the realization of the need for lasting relationships as the only context for community transformation. Our mission is to empower youth to grow into community leaders through mutually transformational relationships. Blueprint 58 seeks to raise up a new generation of leaders from the community by fostering transformational relationships, a safe haven for neighborhood kids, better educational opportunities. We are a movement of Christ followers who believe that the Gospels promises of hope and change are possible even in the darkest corners of our city."

Let me give you one more. Scott and Tricia Burgess were just sent out a few months ago. Tricia is now leading Global Health Outreach. She just returned from leading a team to Kenya. It was a two-week trip medical mission trip to Kenya. Here's the report from Tricia. She said, "Here are the totals for these two weeks of ministry. Total patients seen: 3,375. Total prescriptions: 5,525. Total prayers of salvation: 889." What I'm saying to you is that God's plan is to use you to reach people that He has plans for.

The third thing: you are not the first one with others on your mind. When you look across the yard at that neighbor and you think, "I need to share Jesus with them," you are not the first one. That person that you work next to, the teacher you teach with, a student you go to school with - you may think, "I wonder if they know Jesus." You're not the first one to think of them. When we look here at the story of Nathanael, Philip thinks of Nathaniel, and he goes and gets him to tell him, "I found the Messiah." What do they find out? Jesus had already seen him under the fig tree.

Listen to me - those thoughts, those burdens, those cares, those concerns that you have for others - it's not original with you. You're a part of the chain. You're a part of the link. You're a part of the work. You're a part of what God is doing in the come and see, go and tell. When you come and see Jesus and God puts you in the path and the life of other people, remember that these are people that He's already seen under the fig tree. He knows their heart, knows their need, and He has set you in that mission field so that you can be the one to go and tell them to come and see Jesus who's changed your life. Thinking about those these pictures of how God is at work raises this new burden in my life that I've got to come and see Him and then go and tell! Because I'm a part of what God's

doing in the life of others that He's already at work in to bring them to Him. Come and see, go and tell.

The last thing is that God has more in store for your life spiritually than you've ever thought of and than you've ever known. It's right here in verse 51: "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.'" This was a reference back to Jacob where he had a dream and saw the ladder going into heaven and the angels coming back and forth. He knew that it was the gate of heaven. It was the vessel. It was the house of God. Jesus acknowledged that they knew that story. Instead of a ladder to heaven, Jesus Himself is descending. He says to Nathanael, "You just believe because I saw you under the fig tree, but you haven't seen anything yet! It's just getting started!"

Junior Hill used to say that one of the most delightful phrases he would ever hear in his life was when the host was clearing the table after dinner and she would say, "Keep your fork." This is Jesus's way of saying to Nathanael, "Keep your fork. You haven't tasted anything yet." I want you to think with me today about coming and seeing, and when you leave today, I want you to think about going and telling.