

Come, and You Will See – John 1:35-51

Sermon – Pastor Joe Davis

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I. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Have you ever encountered someone in your life that you really wanted to get to know? There was just something about them that impressed you and drew you in and made you want to be their friend and spend time with them and get to know them. But as you pursued that relationship and tried to get to know them and spend time with them, you soon found out that the feeling wasn't mutual and they either didn't have time for you or just weren't interested in getting to know you. This is a very common occurrence in human relationships, and, like you, I've been on both ends of these types of relationships. Usually I've been the one wanting to build a relationship and be friends with someone, but they're just not interested. But there have been a few times in my life when someone has wanted to be my friend, and for some reason or other I've been the one who has pushed them away and resisted any building of friendship.

One of the most memorable of these experiences happened when I was in junior high. My mom and dad had volunteered to take in a young boy named Justin who was three years younger than me. Justin's mom had recently left he and his dad, and his dad's job required him to be out-of-town for large parts of the year. So Justin came to live with us for a season. Now if you had known me in my growing up years, you would have known me as a quiet and shy loner who spent a lot of time reading or drawing in his room and much preferred the company of horses over people. I was quite comfortable and content being alone and not having to talk to or be around people. But as Justin arrived in our home, the delicate balance I had achieved in my life was suddenly completely overthrown. You see, Justin was extremely impressed with me as an older boy, was desperate for my company and companionship, and wanted to spend every waking moment with me. He wanted to follow me, literally, everywhere I went. He wanted to live with me and learn from me and do absolutely everything with me. Suddenly, the only place I was ever alone was in the bathroom.

As you can imagine, this was my ultimate nightmare and I began to spend a lot of mental energy trying to invent ways to disappear and get away from Justin. My sister tells of one time when we were all sitting around the living room one day. I was sitting quietly on the couch with Justin right next to me, of course. Everyone except me was talking and visiting normally, when suddenly, out of the blue, I just leaped off the couch and took off at a full run, trying to lose Justin. But Justin was ready for anything and was only about one second behind me, also at a full run. My attempt at escaping was a bust. My only victory in that particular attempt was that as Justin followed me downstairs and into my bedroom and even up to the top bunk, he hit his head on the railing of the bunk bed. Serves him right, I selfishly thought. Pretty nice guy, huh?

Well, this scenario repeated itself over and over again and my attitude toward Justin and the way I treated him continued to degenerate until my mom finally had to intervene and help me get back on track. I think we made a little progress from there, but to my great relief Justin soon went back to live with his dad and I was able to return to my previous existence. Life was bearable again! Fortunately I've never been quite as brutal in the few other instances since then when someone has tried to overpower me with their intense efforts to be my friend, and yet still there have been a few times when I've been the one pushing other people away when they've wanted to get to know me. More often though in my life, it's been the other way around. I've wanted to get know someone and be friends, but they either don't have time or space in their life or they just aren't interested. And my guess is that this has been a common experience for most of you as well in your lives.

But did you know that there's one person who not only is the most fascinating and engaging and wisdom-filled person we could ever know and spend time with, but who also fully wants to be with us and spend time with us and share life with us? And he's never limited by time or selfishness or having too many other friends or because he doesn't like us or find us interesting enough. And he's never disappointed when we share who we really are, and he always wants to continue in friendship no matter what mistakes we make. We're going to see a little glimpse of how this is true today as we continue on in the book of John, chapter 1. Turn there in your Bibles if you would. We'll be focusing on verses 35 to 51 today.

We're picking up where we left off last week, on the very next day in fact. John the Baptist on the previous day had just pointed out Jesus of Nazareth to his disciples and made it clear to them that he is the Messiah, the Christ, the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. You can imagine what his disciples must have been thinking and wondering and probably dreaming about since that bold announcement from John. Think about it: they now knew the identity of the Savior who had been promised for over 2,000 years. So what now?

II. FOLLOWING AND LIVING WITH JESUS (Vs. 35 to 39)

Well let's find out as we begin with verses 35 to 39, which I've labeled in your sermon notes: *Following and Living with Jesus.*

35 The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" 37 The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38 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?" 39 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.

I can't help but wonder if John was telling his disciples here to get with the program: *Did you two hear what I said yesterday? The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, is that guy right over there. So what are you doing still standing here with me?* You see, John had been training and teaching his disciples for this very moment. His whole life and ministry was not about getting a following for himself or building up his ego or feeling valuable because he had so many people who respected him and listened to his teaching. Instead, everything he was doing was focused on preparing the way for the Lamb of God, so that when he arrived people's hearts would be ready to follow him. Now the time had come, and John was ready to release his disciples to move on from him to become disciples of Jesus.

Well, the two disciples standing with John got the message, and they soon began to awkwardly follow Jesus as he was walking. Can you imagine how intimidating it would have been to try and start a conversation with a person whom you had

just discovered was the actual Son of God, the Messiah? It's no wonder they were just walking behind Jesus and not saying a word!

In college I got to meet a well-known Christian rock artist named, Margaret Becker, who was quite popular back in a day, and I remember suffering some serious stress trying to figure out what I was going to say to her when I got to the front of the line. When I finally got there, I think I stumbled out with something like... "Buh, buh, buh...What kind of music do you like to listen to?" She graciously responded with some type of answer that she could come up with in the 15 seconds she had available, and I remember kicking myself quite often later for how dumb and awkward I sounded and for my poor choice of questions.

So take that silly experience and imagine how much more intimidating it would have been to try and start a conversation with the very Son of God. And yet, at John's second prompting, probably shaking in their sandals, the two men summoned up some courage and began following Jesus and trying to figure out how to start the conversation. And it doesn't seem to have been long before Jesus noticed that he was being stalked. Turning around, he began the conversation for them, asking them, "What are you seeking?" *You seem to be following me, what is that you want?* And in response, John's disciples come up with a pretty funny question to ask when just beginning a conversation with someone for the first time. In this day and age, we would be a bit comfortable if the first words out of stranger's mouth were: "Where do you live?" We'd probably respond with: "Who are you and why do you want to know?"

But isn't Jesus' response to them beautiful: "***Come, and you will see.***" He doesn't treat them with suspicion or keep them at arm's length or laugh at their awkward question. Instead, in tune with the Holy Spirit and following his guidance, Jesus sees past the awkwardness and the strange question and sees to the heart of what's going on. He sees two intimidated men who really want to follow him and get to know him and learn from him, and he invites them in with open arms. *Come with me and I'll show you where and how I live and teach you all that you want to know and more. Let's go!* And that's just what happened. The men followed Jesus to the place where he was staying, and then it seems they even stayed the night with him, since it was already the tenth hour, meaning 4:00 pm for us.

III. BRINGING OTHERS TO JESUS (Vs. 40 to 51)

Well, John's disciples were clearly impressed with Jesus as they spent time with him, and quite naturally they wanted to spread the news that they had found the Messiah. Let's read verses 40 to 42 to see what happens next. I've labeled this section in your notes: *Bringing Others to Jesus*.

40 One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). 42 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).

So we discover here that one of John the Baptist's disciples who had first followed Jesus, was Andrew...who ended up becoming one of the Twelve. Most scholars have concluded that the other man here was most likely the writer of the gospel we're studying right now: John, the apostle. But here we're focused on Andrew and how he responded to the news about Jesus' true identity and what he had experienced in actually spending time with him. We find that the FIRST thing he did was go and tell his own brother, who is also a very well-known person to us: Simon, who was named Peter by Jesus. We see that Andrew didn't keep it to himself, but like we all want to do when we discover big, life-changing news, he wanted to spread it around.

And notice the confidence Andrew had in telling his brother who Jesus is. There was no doubt in his mind and no attempt to be conservative just in case he was wrong. It wasn't: *We think we might have found the Messiah*. It was: *We have found the Messiah, the Christ*. Simon was about to experience drastic life change, whether he realized it or not, and as Andrew brought him to Jesus, lo and behold: Jesus seemed to already know him. And not only did Jesus know him, he also had an idea, revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, about what the future would hold for this simple fisherman from Galilee.

Imagine what it would feel like to meet someone for the first time and have them give you a new name with the first words out of their mouth. ***"You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).*** Jesus gives us a new identity when we come into relationship with him, doesn't he? And he wasted no time here with

Simon. Interestingly, Andrew and Peter didn't actually become full-time disciples of Jesus yet. They met him and spent some time with him near the area where John was baptizing, but then went back to their fishermen jobs on the Sea of Galilee for a while. It was later that Jesus returned and called them away from their boats to become full-time fishers of men.

Well, the next day Jesus was on the move. Let's see what he does next in verses 43 to 44:

43 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

So it's not clear here whether Andrew and Simon Peter at this point traveled back with Jesus to their hometown of Bethsaida in Galilee. That seems like a good possibility since the very next day after meeting Simon Peter he traveled to his and Andrew's home town, but the text doesn't tell us. Nevertheless, Bethsaida, on the north end of the Sea of Galilee is where the Spirit led Jesus to go next. And there he found another person whom the Father had set apart to be one of the Twelve: Philip. Jesus seems to have been looking for him under the direction of the Spirit, and when he found him, he simply said, "Follow me."

This is the simple call Jesus has to all of us who come into relationship with him: "Follow me." *Don't just believe in me and then go your own way. Yes, believe in me, you'll get nowhere without that. But then live with me and learn to live how I live. "Come, and you will see." Your eyes will be opened and your life will change.* Following Jesus is all about living **with him** and learning **from him**, and then actually living **like him**.

Well, clearly Philip responded boldly to Jesus' invitation to follow him, but guess what? Like Andrew, he also wanted to tell someone else. Let's read verses 45 to 46:

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." 46 Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

Just like Andrew, Philip had no doubt that Jesus is the One, and you can see this in what he told Nathanel. *We have found him and his name is Jesus, the son of Joseph, from the town of Nazareth.* There's no *thinking* they might have found him or *wondering* if he's the One. It was an established fact for Philip. And Nathanael's only concern seems to have been the disreputable town of Nazareth. Of all places, could the Messiah really have grown up in the dirty town of Nazareth? *Come and see for yourself,* was Philip's only reply.

Well, Nathanael was definitely interested, and he followed Philip to where Jesus was. Let's read what happened when Nathanael encountered the Son of God, in verses 47 through 49:

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" 48 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." 49 Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

Wouldn't it be strange to be meeting someone for the first time and then find out they already know all about you and even have insights into your character? We see here that the Holy Spirit was revealing to Jesus truths about other people's character and intentions and heart attitudes. And this continues to happen throughout Jesus' subsequent ministry. As Jesus followed the Spirit's lead in everything, as he had done during his 40 days of temptation in the wilderness, the Spirit revealed everything he needed to know as he walked along. And in this case, Jesus was astounded to meet an Israelite who was fully sincere and real and had no concern for covering up who he was on the inside with religiosity. And Nathanael was shocked to find out that this Jesus already knew who he really was and even seemed to have been expecting him.

Naturally, Nathanael wanted to know how it could be that this stranger already seemed to know him. Jesus answered, ***"Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."*** This answer had a profound effect on Nathanael. Perhaps he had been praying in a completely private place when he was under the fig tree and there was no possibility that someone could have known he was there.

Or perhaps God had been communicating in a special way to Nathanael under the fig tree, and the fact that Jesus knew about it was what amazed Nathanael. But whatever the case, the facts that Jesus seemed to know Nathanael and have insights into his character before he had even met him; and that Jesus was aware of his fig tree experience, worked together to remove any doubts Nathanael had about this Jesus from Nazareth and the claims Philip had made about him. And in further demonstration of his deceit-free character, Nathanael spilled out exactly the conclusions he had come to in his mind: *Teacher, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!*

Nathanael was a believer in the truest sense of the word. He responded to Jesus the way we all need to respond to him: with full-on, doubt-free, confident, committed belief that Jesus is everything we've ever hoped he would be. He didn't talk himself out of it. He didn't reserve a way out for himself, just in case. He didn't play the skeptic. He jumped in with full trust and never looked back. May God create in each of us the faith and deceit-free character of Nathanael!

Well, Jesus continued to be amazed with the special person God had created Nathanael to be, and said this in verses 50 to 51:

50 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." 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."

Nathanael was just seeing the very beginnings of the amazing things God was going to do through Jesus. Jesus was going to give Nathanael much greater reasons than the fig tree to believe that he is the Christ, the Son of God, the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. But as Nathanael would continue with this simple, fully-engaged and surrendered trust in Jesus, his eyes were going to be opened in a big way to see the spiritual realities that most of the world was completely unable to see because of unbelief. He would see heaven itself opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on Jesus. *Come, and you will see! With Philip and these others, follow me. As you do, your eyes will be opened to the spiritual realities all around you. You'll finally understand what's really going on in the world and learn to live like me in the kingdom of the heavens,*

connected with your God and walking in his power and purposes. Come, and you will see.

IV. APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

Did you know that Jesus is giving each of us today that same invitation? *Come, and you will see. Believe in me. Then follow me. Live **with me**. Learn **from me**. And learn to live **like me** by the power of the Holy Spirit I give to you. Jesus invites us to come as we are...with our fears...our failures...our awkwardness...our feelings of inadequacy...our shame...our brokenness...our sin. It takes courage to come to him in humility with these things...to start walking behind him and figuring out how to start this conversation. But as we do...as we seek him out and offer these things up to him, he turns around toward us and says: *Come, and you will see. I'll take all that stuff off your back and you can come live with me and learn from me. I'll show you a much better way to live and I'll never, ever leave your side. I love you and I know you inside and out and I have great plans for you and me together. Will you trust me? Will you stay with me and follow me? Life's going to change dramatically, but I promise it's going to be a very good change.**

You see, unlike me and my self-centered response to my little friend, Justin, who desperately wanted to be with me and follow me and learn from me, Jesus welcomes us warmly every time and invites us to live with him and learn from him to our heart's content. And the truth is: Jesus is the One we've all been looking for all of our lives, whether we've realized it or not. He alone can be that one person who can truly teach us the way of wisdom and open our eyes to the way life with God really works, and who can love us with that unfailing love and acceptance we've been looking and longing for all of our lives. And if just a little bit of Justin's commitment to being with me every moment of every day could take hold in our desire and commitment to live with and follow Jesus, we would see some radical transformation and radical Christlikeness starting to blossom in our lives. Jesus says to all of us every day: *Come, and you will see.*

Will you accept his invitation? Will you do more than just believe in him? Will you live with him and learn from him with all your heart and allow him to guide you fully into his purposes? If you will, prepare yourself for life transformation...for a radical re-adjustment of your priorities...for a desire welling up inside you to share Jesus with others. Life with him is life to the full and he's going to love us

and change us and take us places we never imagined or even thought possible. Will you follow? Will you pursue him with your whole heart? Will you walk into the purposes he has for your life?

SERMON APPLICATION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

Read John 1:35-51, asking the Holy Spirit to guide you as you read. Look at the surrounding verses, take your time and talk to God as you read and meditate on it. Think through the following, writing notes and thoughts and looking up related Scriptures as needed:

Write down from the passage or from what was shared in the sermon: 1) a truth that stands out to you; 2) anything you believe God is showing you or telling you personally through it; 3) any related Scripture that comes to mind; 4) any questions you have.

Have you had any experiences in your life where you've wanted to build a friendship with someone, but they weren't interested or didn't have time for you? Describe one. How did that make you feel?

In considering the way Jesus responded to the two disciples who wanted to follow him and his interactions with Peter, Philip and Nathanael, what are some things you can learn about Jesus and the way he responds to those who want to get to know him?

How would you describe your current desire and commitment to fully follow Jesus (live with him, learn from him, and live like him)? What are some of the things that hold you back in this area?

As you think about the way Jesus lived and his priorities, what are some current similarities and differences in the way you live and your priorities?

Summarize below anything God is calling you personally to believe, any actions God is asking you to take, or any attitudes He wants to change. Repent where needed and enjoy God's mercy. Then pray over these items and make a plan for change by the power of the Spirit.