

Come and See

John 1:43-51

In these days leading up to the Iowa Caucuses, the candidates are making their final pushes to win. They're hosting events all across the state, trying not to let winter weather stop them. With every event, text messages and emails and phone calls go out with the invitation to come and see the candidates.

That invitation comes because of what makes the caucuses different than normal elections. With the caucuses, national candidates have to interact with voters in more intimate settings. It is different trying to pitch yourself to a couple dozen people in a Pizza Ranch than it is to talk to hundreds from a debate stage, or millions through television or the internet. Seeing people up close and personal can upset preconceptions, and change expectations. It all starts with that invitation to come and see.

Of course it is not just politicians that people come and see. Caitlyn Clark and the Iowa women's basketball team sells out everywhere they play, as people want to see the chance to see her play in person. Hilton was packed Tuesday night, despite the weather, because Cyclone fans want to see in person what this team can do. The Cubs Convention in Chicago is packed because fans want the chance to see their favorite players up close, as well as get the chance to ask the owners why they haven't made as many offseason moves as fans expected.

When Philip comes to find Nathanael and brings him to see Jesus, there's a clash of expectations there. Philip has seen Jesus, has been called by Jesus, and is following Jesus. We don't get any details, or anything about what made Philip agree to follow Jesus. Maybe he'd heard from Andrew and Peter, since they were from the city, but we're not clearly told

that. Whatever it is, though, Philip is excited. He goes to find his friend Nathanael to share what he's found. Nathanael seems less than enthusiastic, though.

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

Nathanael is unlike the other disciples. Everyone else that Jesus calls seems to come right away. Peter, Andrew, James and John are called from their fishing boats and follow, no questions asked. Matthew leaves his tax collecting booth. Philip is called by Jesus and follows immediately. But not Nathanael. He's skeptical. He spends his time under a fig tree, a traditional place for reading the Scriptures and prayer. He hasn't found anything in his studies about Nazareth. It's not even mentioned! He's from Cana in Galilee, we find out in the next chapter, and so this isn't the scorn that someone from the big city of Jerusalem would have. All he knows about it is Nazareth is a small town that's not quite in the middle of nowhere, but you can see it from there. How could anything good come from there? His expectations are low, to say the least.

Philip responded to Nathanael's skepticism with an invitation—"Come and see!" When Nathanael asked if anything good could come out of Nazareth, Philip didn't try to debate him or prove it to him first. He merely answered, "Come and see." Instead of arguing with Nathanael Philip invited him to meet Jesus and

experience for himself meeting Jesus could change his life forever.

That's what happens. Jesus saw Nathanael where he was and knew him as he was (Jesus is the omniscient, all-knowing God, after all). He saw that Nathanael was a sinner in need of forgiveness, and that is why he called him to faith through Philip.

Jesus sees you where you are in your spiritual journey and knows you for what you are. And yet he still loves you and forgives you. That is the kind of God Jesus is. He sees you sitting under the fig tree, driving to work, changing your baby's diapers, or sitting here in church. He knows your every thought and the number of hairs on your head! He even knew you before you were born. All of that is what Jesus meant when he told Nathanael, "Before Philip called you, when you were sitting under the fig tree, I saw you."

Nathanael was overcome by Jesus' words. He didn't know what to do or say. His heart overflowed with wonder and joy and hope, and he knew that Philip's claims were true. No, he did more than just know it—he *believed* that Jesus is the One that Moses and the Prophets wrote about in what he spent all of his time reading. In a bold confession of faith, he proclaimed, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Once he saw for himself, he believed. All it took was that simple invitation from Philip.

Philip gave his friend Nathanael the gift of seeing the unexpected. When Philip said, "Come and see," and Nathanael did, he met not only Jesus, son of Joseph from Nazareth, but Jesus, Son of the Eternal God, the one of whom the law and prophets spoke, the ruler of all times and places. In listening, though with skepticism, to his friend Philip, Nathanael met

Jesus, the one who saw Nathanael studying scripture under the fig tree, the one who sees us working and playing, worshipping and praying, the one to whom and through whom we all are called. Nathanael didn't expect much, didn't think anything good could come from such a small town. Little did he know.

When we are asked to share our faith, we are good at coming up with excuses. "I'm just a kid; who am I that God would call me to tell my classmates about Jesus?" "I don't have time to do anything for God because I'm always busy with classes and clubs and computer games." "I can't speak Chinese, and I can't remember any English grammar rules." "I'm too old." "There has to be someone else who would be better at this than I am."

We can overcomplicate things sometimes. All it takes to share our faith is the simple words of "Come and see" as we tell others of how God has been at work in our lives. That's it. The Holy Spirit works faith.

When people are asked what initially brought them to church, by far the highest number is that they were invited by a friend or relative, around 83%. The Holy Spirit can work on anyone. An invitation to "come and see" may not work at first, and may include more of showing how God is at work in your life first, and the possibility of further invitations later on.

"Come and see." Jesus sees you where you are and knows you for what you are. Still today he calls you to follow him. And he invites you and everyone to "come and see" what he is all about. Come and see, and your life will never be the same.

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