

**Epiphany 2: 1/14/18**  
**St. Paul: Luxemburg, WI**  
**Text: John 1:43-51**  
**Theme: Come and See!**

Some years back, when the kids were quite a bit younger, right after Christmas, we went to Wisconsin Dells. We stayed one night at the Great Wolf Lodge. The lobby alone was filled with all kinds of attractions. There were things everywhere trying to grab your attention. There was a talking moose (I assume a mechanical one and not actually live) and an actual gingerbread house that you could sit in and have dinner. My attention was being pulled between struggling heroically, yet alone, with a mountain of luggage and trying to determine if the numbers at the bottom of the bill were for real or just another attempt to grab my attention. Suddenly, a little girl had my hand and was yelling, "Daddy, come and see!" I wasn't necessarily that excited about coming and seeing, but she was determined that I was going to come and see. She pulled me to one side of the lobby and there it was: a big plastic snowman with a cupcake on its head. It was interesting...I'll grant you that.

Back when I was in high school, I was making plans for college. I was sorting out where to go to school and what to do when I got there. I had a pretty good idea on things

and so I went to visit Concordia University Wisconsin one weekend. I had a brother who was already there and studying to be a pastor. I remember when I got there and met up with my brother and some of his friends. They started telling me about the one old professor, who is in heaven now. They talked about how he knew the Bible and taught it so faithfully. They talked about how this man loved Jesus and gave witness to Jesus in every class. They told me I had to meet him. They said, "Come and see!" It was something I had to see for myself.

Come and see! We talk in those terms all of the time, don't we? We want people to come and see what is important in our lives. When someone builds a new house, they don't just want tell others about it. They want people to see it for themselves. When a child is born, you don't just call your parents and friends and describe it to them, you tell them to come and see, and they do. When people meet someone who is really important to them and changes their lives, they don't just want to tell people about it. They want people to meet the person for themselves.

We see that in our text here this morning. We see people who have met Jesus and they want others to see Him as well. We see them running and telling others and saying, "Come and see!" They had seen Jesus, and Jesus had

grabbed a hold of them. They wanted others to come and see Jesus. These people who had seen Jesus were specific about why they wanted others to see Him as well. We too here this day hear that same invitation, "Come and see!" What are we to come and see? We are being invited to come and see Jesus.

Philip ran and told Nathanael, "Come and see" but it started before that. Philip was running and telling Nathanael to "Come and see" because John the Baptist had told him to "Come and see." What did John the Baptist tell Philip to come and see? He said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." He was telling his disciples to come and see Jesus because Jesus was the one who had come to take away the sins of the world. He was telling them to come and see the one who had come to lay down His life on the cross for their sins.

This was something that Philip was excited about. He went to see, and he found out that indeed Jesus was the one who had come to take away the sins of the world. He saw that Jesus was the one who had come to lay down His life for the sins of all people. It was in Jesus that he could have the assurance that his sins were forgiven and that he could have the promise of heaven. This was news that Philip wanted to share. He immediately runs to his brother

Andrew. He goes to the person who is the closest to him in his life. He goes to the person that he cares about the most and he tells him that he has found the Messiah. He wants Andrew to know about Jesus. He wants Andrew to know about the forgiveness of sins that Jesus has come to bring.

But immediately the message of the savior is met with doubt. We see that Nathanael replies by saying, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" You see Nazareth from a spiritual perspective was a nasty place. It was filled with evil. People didn't have much interest in worshipping God. They were influenced by false religions. People lived lives that were absolutely evil. Nathanael is questioning whether or not God can really bring good out of evil. Nathanael has doubts about whether God can really bring good out of a society that is so evil. He ultimately has doubts about whether or not God can really change people and bring something good from evil.

We see that Philip replies by saying, "Come and see." Philip is telling Nathanael to come and see Jesus. Jesus has taken a hold of Philip's heart and he wants Nathanael to see how wonderful Jesus is. He wants Nathanael to see all that Jesus has come to accomplish for him, and he wants Nathanael to see the difference he has made in his life. Nathanael goes and Jesus takes a hold of his heart.

Nathanael goes and he sees that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. He sees that Jesus is something good coming out of evil. He sees that Jesus is perfect. He sees that God can indeed bring good out of evil. He could bring something good out of Nazareth and He can bring good out of any situation. Nathanael would see that even when Jesus was nailed to the cross. He would see a situation so evil that it was beyond words; but yet, God would bring good from it. He would see how the resurrection would follow Jesus' death.

We are invited to come and see as well. We are invited to come and see Jesus. We are invited to come and see that He is the one takes away the sin of the world. He is the one who laid down His life that our sins might be forgiven, and we come and see. We come to the Sacrament of Holy Communion and see the forgiveness that He has won for us.

However, we know that at times we meet that invitation to come and see with the same kind of skepticism that Nathanael did. We at times question whether or not God can really bring good out of evil. We look at our society and we at times wonder if God can really bring good out of evil. We wonder if Jesus can really make a difference in our world, and there are times when we question if Jesus is

really as good as people claim that He is. We see people living with incredible amounts of guilt in their lives somehow not believing that their mistakes and failures can be forgiven. We at times question whether or not Jesus can really deliver on the promises that He makes. We hear the same invitation that Nathanael did: come and see! We are invited to see how Jesus died for our sins on the cross so that we might have forgiveness. We are invited to see how Jesus works in the lives of others and in our own lives.

Hicham Chehab was born into a Muslim family in Lebanon. He was recruited by a Muslim group when he was thirteen and he was trained to use rocket launchers, mortars, and rifles. He grew up being taught and believing that all Christians were unclean infidels and deserved to die. He was trained as a sniper and taught to use long-range rifles to shoot Christians walking the streets of Beirut. However, he was injured in a car crash and began studies at the American University of Beirut. His brother was a captain in a Muslim militia and was killed by a Christian militia. His thoughts turned to revenge and he became an assassin at night stalking and killing his enemies. However, his conscience began to bother him as a result of seeing some of the people who were being killed. He wondered if forgiveness was even possible. It was in

his studies that he was required to read portions of Scripture and he began to think about who Jesus was. It was at this time that he ran into a Lutheran missionary who talked to him and invited him to come and see. He invited him to hear about the forgiveness that Jesus had won for him and to see the difference that Jesus could make in his life. He saw the love of Christ and in two thousand and nine he became an LCMS pastor.

We are invited to come and see, come and see Jesus. We see the forgiveness that Jesus has won for us. We see the difference that Jesus makes in the lives of others and we see the difference that He makes in our lives. Through faith in Jesus, we have seen heaven itself opened for us. You see this is also evangelism at its finest. Jesus had taken a hold of Philip's heart and he invited Nathanael to come and see. Jesus has also taken a hold of our hearts, and we cannot help but to tell others to come and see. We invite people to come here with us and see Jesus. We want others to come and see Jesus.

However, we need to be constantly reminded that we are to invite people to come and see Jesus. I remember talking to a pastor friend one time about a call that he had received to a congregation in Florida. They invited him to come and see. They were very proud of what their church

was doing and they wanted him to come and see. He said that when he got there they wanted to show him the massive and beautiful building they had built. They wanted him to see the impressive band that they had in their church. They wanted him to see the incredible youth program they had. He lamented that they had invited him to come and see, but it was not Jesus that he saw.

It is very easy for us to become distracted from what it is that we are to invite people to come and see. It is easy for churches to want to invite people to come and see their beautiful buildings, their wonderful daycare, or for our schools to invite people to come and see our great athletic programs or our incredible academic standards. It is easy for us to become distracted from what it is that people really need to come and see. If we are inviting people to come and see something besides Jesus, we are not practicing evangelism and what we are doing cannot be called a mission.

One time a man was talking to his pastor about the church's need for growth. He wanted the church to be bigger, which if it is desired for the right reason is certainly a good thing, but this man didn't seem to know why the church should be bigger. He just wanted it to be bigger. He complained to the pastor that the church just

didn't seem to have much to draw people with. The church didn't have an overly dynamic pastor. It didn't have an exciting band or music program. The youth program was small. Finally, the pastor said, "But we have God's Word. We have the good news of Jesus. We are able to invite people to come and see Jesus." We invite the world around us to come and see. Jesus has taken a hold of our hearts. We have seen the salvation that He offers to us. We have seen the joy and peace that come from knowing Him. Again, today, we come and see. Amen!!!