

“Come and see”, John 1:43-51 (Jan 17, 2021)

“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”, “Come and see.”

(Slide 1) Today’s gospel scripture reminds me of one of the Ted talks that really impressed me. For those who don’t know what TED talks are, I will give you a brief explanation. TED is the acronym for Technology, Entertainment, Design, and it is a media organization that posts talks online for free distribution, under the slogan "ideas worth spreading". TED's early emphasis was technology and design, consistent with its Silicon Valley origins, but it has been broadened, so now it includes various topics. Since June 2006, TED Talks have been offered for free viewing online, through TED.com.

(Slide 2) A woman whose name is Ramona Pierson shared her personal story on stage at TED with the title, “An unexpected place of healing.” When she was 22 years old, she had a terrible accident and it totally changed her life. While she was running across the street with her dog, a drunken driver ran a red light and hit them. She had major damage all over her body and ended up put into a drug-induced coma. Eighteen months later, she woke up, but she was blind, and she could neither speak nor walk. To make her look human again, she had more than 50 surgeries.

Everybody lost faith in her being able to recover, so the hospital decided to send her to another place, which was randomly picked by throwing a dart. Finally, she was sent to a senior home in Colorado. All of the people who have a lot of skills and talents at that senior home worked together to bring her back to normal. They helped her learn how to eat, how to speak, how to write, and even how to cross the street while being blind and living with massive trauma. They put all their resources together and raised funds to rebuild her life, and finally she could return to her college and was close to normal. Although everyone thought that there was no hope in her life, the senior home became an unexpected place of healing.

Through this story, I found the lesson of today's gospel scripture. And also, I found the future of our church. To have a better understanding of today's gospel scripture, it's better for you to read the whole chapter. **(Slide 3)** In John chapter 1, "Come and see" appeared 2 times. In verse 39 and 46. In verse 39, when two of John's disciples asked Jesus, "Where are you staying?" Jesus said to them, "Come and see." And in verse 46, when Nathanael asked Philip, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." We commonly think that a thousand hearings are not worth one seeing. In both cases, both Jesus and Philip did not give a verbal explanation, rather they just said, "Come and see," and it was worth it.

Two of John's disciples came and saw where Jesus was staying, and they stayed with him that day. And finally, they knew that he is the Messiah. And when Nathanael met Jesus, he also came to know that Jesus is the Son of God. John 1:14 says that "the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." What both of John's disciples and Nathanael saw was the one who John 1:14 said "the Word became flesh and lived among them." Although Jesus already has lived among them, they did not recognize him, but now they came to know who Jesus is. He is the Messiah and the Son of God whom they were really looking forward to meeting.

(Slide 4) At that time, Israelites used to read the law of the Lord under a fig tree, which is a quiet place for those who want to study and meditate on the Word of God. Nathanael is one of the Israelites who delighted in the law of the Lord and meditated on it day and night. Maybe that is why he did not have any expectation about Nazareth. Nazareth is an undistinguished place in the Bible. In the Old Testament, it is not foretold that God's chosen one would come from Nazareth. Therefore, when Philip said to Nathanael, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law and the Prophets: Jesus, Joseph's son, from Nazareth," Nathanael responded to Philip, "Can anything good come out to Nazareth?"

However, even though Nathanael doubted and did not recognize him, Jesus already knew who Nathanael was: “I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.” Nathanael has no choice but to confess, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” In that moment, Nazareth is no longer a meaningless or undistinguished place for Nathanael. Rather it became the most special place for him/ because he met Jesus and saw his glory there. Nazareth became an unexpected place of healing to Nathanael.

(Slide 5) I hope and believe that our church also can be an unexpected place of healing to anybody. Right now, as Nathanael did, we might have thought, “Does this church really have a hope and future? We are located in a small town. We only have a small number of people, mostly elderly. Can anything good come out to this church?” I would say, YES! Yes, we do! Everything good can come out of this church.

(Slide 6) Remember Ramona Pierson’s story that I shared with you today. When she was sent to a senior home, no one had hope or an expectation for her to recover there and come back to a normal life. But, using all of their gifts, talents, skills, wisdom, and love the people there helped her to come back to an almost normal life. A place of no expectation and no hope was changed to a place of healing and regeneration. I think this is what the church looks like. Although people come without any expectation or hope, helping them to see the living God among us and find the new life in Christ Jesus is what we need to do as a church.

(Slide 7) In many places in the Bible; Romans 12:5, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Ephesians 3:6 and 5:23, Colossians 1:18 and Colossians 1:24, it is written that the church is the body of Christ, and the head of the church is Jesus Christ, and we are the other parts of the body. God gave each one of us various gifts, talents, skills, wisdom, and one love. With this, we can make this church be a place of healing and regeneration for everyone who comes and sees us.

For me, firstly, church is the place in which I grew up. I grew up in the church with a lot of love, care, encouragement, guidance, and support from many people. The church was the place that I felt safe and cozy as I grew up. Secondly, church is the place that I share all the memories of my life. I was baptized, confirmed, and got married at church. Also, my children will grow up in the church as I did. And my funeral will be held at church. I shared, am sharing, and will share countless moments of my life in Church. Thirdly, church is the place that I meet Jesus. When I am in trouble, I first come to church to cry out. When I am so happy, I first come to church to praise God. When I feel empty, I first come to church to be filled and strengthened by God. Whenever I am spiritually lost, church is always the place for peace, comfort, and healing. In addition to this, for me, church is always the people, not only who I love and care for, but also who love and care for me.

What does the church mean to you? Still, do you ask, “can anything good come out of this church?” Or are you ready to say, “Come and see?” “Come and see” can be the best response to those who dismiss our faith claim and to those who doubt Jesus can mean anything for their lives. **(Slide 8)** I hope this church is the place that you can proudly say “come and see” to your family. I hope this church is the place that you can confidently say “come and see” to your friends. I hope this church is the place that you can joyfully say “come and see” to anyone who needs the love of Jesus Christ. “Come and see” is a short but very powerful invitation. When two of John’s disciples heard this, they found the Messiah. When Nathanael heard this, he found the Son of God. With these three words, “Come and see” you can invite people to receive grace upon grace.

“Can anything good come out of this church?” “Come and see!”

Praise God! Amen.