

“Come and See”

John 1:43-51

We have entered into the season of Epiphany. An Epiphany is when that which was once hidden is revealed. All throughout this season we see how Christ is revealed to the world. He is revealed to the Wise Men by the star of Bethlehem. Last week, we saw how He is revealed at His Baptism by the words of John the Baptist, by the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove, and by God the Father Himself thundering down His words from heaven, “This is my Son, whom I love, with Him I am well pleased.”

Later this season, we will see Jesus reveal His power through miracles of healing. However, this week and next week, we see how Jesus is revealed in a way that is more than just a story about something that God did for someone else. Jesus calls His disciples. At this point, Jesus has already spent a day with Andrew, who tells his brother Simon Peter, “We have found the Messiah.” The next day Jesus goes to Galilee and says to Philip (who was from the same town as Peter and Andrew), He says, “Follow Me.”

I hear it all the time, “Why can’t we get a direct message from God? Why can’t God speak to me like He did Samuel, as we heard in our Old Testament reading?”

He doesn't speak to you that way, because that has never been the normal way in which God has approached His people. As is said so eloquently in the letter to the Hebrews, "In many and various ways God spoke to the people of old through the prophets, but now in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son."

When God needed to speak to His people, He spoke through the prophets, and the people were to listen to them. I find it interesting, when you read Scripture, when He really wanted to get their attention, or when He really had a fundamental change in store for His people, there was a meal – Passover, Mt. Sinai, Emmaus, visiting the disciples in the Upper Room Easter evening. There was a meal.

It is still true that when God really wants to get our attention, or when He really has a fundamental change in store for His people, there is a meal. We gather for a meal each week because a fundamental change has taken place in our lives.

God deals with you and me in a very similar way to how He has always dealt with His people: The Word of God is proclaimed with a human voice and God makes His presence known (reveals His will and even Himself in a meal). Whether you are talking Old Testament, New Testament or life in the church today, this is how God has chosen to operate.

Don't look for God in other places. Don't look for signs or miracles. Jesus repeatedly condemns the Jews for such ideas. Luther even says that "God does not want to deal with us human

beings, except by means of His external Word and sacrament. Everything that boasts of being from the Spirit apart from such a Word and sacrament is of the devil.”

This is from the Book of Concord in the Smalcald Articles (which means upholding this understanding of the Word of God and the grace of God is something that I, and every other pastor in our churches, has vowed before God to uphold). It’s important.

God does not deal with you or me apart from His external Word and sacraments. This is how Jesus comes to you. He comes to you and says, “Follow Me.” When you hear Christ say in Scripture, “Follow Me.” He is speaking to you. You should never think that God doesn’t speak to us like He use to “back in Bible times.” He does speak to us and what He does now is better.

“In many and various ways God spoke to the people of old through the prophets, but now in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son.” Not only has He spoken to you with the words first spoken to Philip, “Follow Me,” but like with Philip going to Nathaniel, you have been blessed in your life with someone who has heard that call to faith and has told you about Jesus of Nazareth. God always sends someone to say, “Come and see.”

But with both Philip and Nathaniel, the point of the story is that Jesus is the One finding them, coming to them, revealing Himself as the Messiah, and then says, “You ain’t seen nothin’ yet.”

Did you catch that at the beginning? The next day Jesus found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.” Jesus found Philip. Then Philip goes to his friend Nathaniel and says, “We have found the Messiah. And you will never believe where He is from.”

Actually, Jesus, the Shepherd has found some lost sheep. But it is not surprising that these disciples have a few things backwards. The disciples are “in the dark” and demonstrate backwards thinking until after Jesus is revealed to them on Easter. It is after Easter, like on the road to Emmaus that Jesus will open Scripture to them. The Word of God will reveal to them the truth of who Jesus is. The miracles never did that. At Emmaus, the disciples hearts will burn within them when Jesus speaks the words of the Old Testament, and Jesus will be revealed to the disciples in the breaking of the bread.

Luther has it right, “God does not want to deal with us human beings, except by means of His external Word and sacrament.” “In many and various ways God spoke to the people of old through the prophets, but now in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son.”

When you hear Jesus say, “Follow Me.” He is speaking to you. When you read words of Scripture, God is speaking to you. And it is still true that when God really wants to get your attention, or when He really has a fundamental change in store for His people, there is a meal. “Come and see.” Amen.