

## COME AND SEE

John 1:43-51 Text: 46 *“Nathanael asked, ‘Can anything good come from Nazareth?’ And Philip said, ‘Come and see.’”*

Nothing can beat having first-hand experience. It’s hard to believe something someone tells you if you haven’t experienced it yourself. It’s like riding a roller coaster. You have to get on one and experience the thrills of the ups-and-downs, speed, and sharp turns before you can believe it. When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him, he said, *“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”* (John 1:29) And in our lesson today Philip said, *“Come and see.”* (John 1:46b) When Jesus spoke to Nathaniel He said, *“You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that.”*

First-hand experience has immense importance. Especially with Jesus, because the only way to experience His grace and forgiveness is to experience it yourself. No one else can do it for you! There’s no such thing as *“second-hand grace”* when it comes to having first-hand experience with Jesus. It’s a personal spiritual journey. And it varies from person to person. It’s not the same for everyone! But don’t worry about it, because in an earnest and thankful prayer tell God what you need. And the peace of God which is beyond all human understanding will keep your heart and mind on Jesus. (Phil. 4:6) Believe His promises are true. Keep asking Him until your needs are met and you have your answer. Jesus said, *“Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks, receives. The one who seeks, finds. And the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”* (Luke 11:9,10)

So, never give up! Draw closer to God because He wants to have a closer relationship with you. The presence of God has always been a hope in the lives of His children. From the Old Testament and King David to the New Testament and the Apostle Paul, there are lots of stories how God’s presence has been with His children throughout time. David wrote in a Psalm, *“In my presence is the fullness of joy”* (Psalm 16:11)

But the question is, how can you have the presence of God in your life today? How can you, as a child of God, experience the presence of the Living God in your everyday life? One way is to seek God with an open heart. Always have an open mind. Start setting time aside each day to pray and meditate. Read religious books that inspire you. Attend worship services. Join in church activities. Connect with others who share your faith. It’s important to remember that having a first-hand experience with God is a personal journey. There’s no *one-size-fits-all* approach to God! A bumper sticker read, *“Carpenter from Nazareth. Seeks joiners”*. Carpenters work at construction sites. They finish building projects. But Joiners are responsible for fitting two pieces of wood together. Doors. Window frames. Cabinets. That’s what the bumper sticker meant. Jesus wants you to help join the Gospel story to someone’s life. And the wonderful thing about it is, Jesus wants you to join Him by giving your life to Him. Another bumper sticker read, *“Wise men sought Jesus. They still do!”* And you know what? If you’re smart, you will seek Jesus. And you *will* find Him. And you will receive eternal life through Him.

John the Baptist was baptizing in the Jordan River when two of his disciples heard him describe someone as the *Lamb of God*. They were fascinated. They had been following John the Baptist for quite some time. Now, they wanted to find out about whom he was talking. Both were religious enough to know about the Old Testament prophecies regarding the Messiah. And that’s how it all began. In verse 35, as John watched Jesus walking by, he said, *“Look, the Lamb of God!”* When those two disciples heard John say that they followed Jesus. And when Jesus turned and saw them following Him, He said, *“What are you looking for?”* They said, *“Rabbi” (which means Teacher) where are you staying?”* He said, *“Come and see.”* They did. They wanted to find out more about Jesus and spend some quality time with this special man. Even though Jesus was busy, and undoubtedly had much to do, He gave those seekers time with Him.

And it was about the tenth hour when they asked Jesus where He was staying. That was about 4 PM. Or two hours before sunset. Now, why would John, who was one of the 12 apostles of Jesus, put that into this Gospel? Why bother telling what the time it was? Because when John wrote this Gospel he was an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus. And scholars have argued over this verse an exceptionally long time. It could mean all manner of things. But scholars miss the point! John, being an eyewitness of Jesus, had a first-hand experience!

If I were to ask you where you were when you heard about the death of President Kennedy or Princess Diana, you probably can remember every detail. Why? Because it was something incredibly significant that changed the lives of a lot of people. Can you think of a time when your life was so changed?

Well, Jesus tied it all together in verse 51 when He said, there’s a *way* between God and man, like the ladder Jacob imagined after he had laid down for the night on his way to his relative's house near Haran. Haran, in the Book of Genesis was home to Terah, son of Nahor and father of Abraham and his descendants. It was Abraham's temporary home. Now, while Jacob was dreaming, he saw a ladder set up on the earth with its top reaching to heaven. The angels of God were ascending and descending up and down on it. The LORD stood above the ladder and said, *“I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham, and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants.”*

That was God's message of promise. It was His protection for Jacob and his descendants who would become the Twelve Tribes of Israel! And it was a turning point in Jacob's spiritual journey when he recognized God's presence. So, he renamed the place Bethel, meaning *“house of God”*.

Then, in our lesson we read that *“Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, ‘We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law. And about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’ Nathanael asked, ‘Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?’ ‘Come and see,’ said Philip. And when Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, He said, ‘Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.’ Nathaniel asked, ‘How do you know me?’ Jesus answered, ‘I saw you while you were still under the fig tree, before Philip called you.’ Then Nathanael declared, ‘Rabbi, you are the Son of God. You are the king of Israel.’ Jesus said, ‘You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. But you will see greater things than that.’ Then He added, ‘Very truly I tell you, you will see ‘heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on’ the Son of Man.’”* (John 1:45-51)

What Jesus was telling Nathaniel was that this would happen in his lifetime. Like when Jacob saw the ladder, the broken link between God and man was going to be repaired. Jesus was referring, of course, to His own coming death on the cross which meant, Jesus is the *only way* between God and man. Only Jesus can unlock the gates of Heaven. Only Jesus can let you in. Jesus was made the way, by being *The Way*.

Now, you might believe certain teachings, or rituals, can help you connect with God more deeply. But there’s no other way than Jesus! Only by having a first-hand experience with Jesus can you connect with God. You must come to God through Jesus. And Him alone. What wonderful and exciting words are found in verse 41. *“The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ).”* After Andrew and John had followed Jesus home who John the Baptist had referred to as the *“Lamb of God”* they became changed men. They had met the Messiah! They were so excited after speaking with Jesus they just had to tell someone. They couldn’t hold the news to themselves any longer. It was wonderful!

Andrew was so excited about meeting Jesus he found his brother Simon and took him to see Jesus. And when Jesus saw Simon Jesus said, *“You are Simon, the son of John. Your name will be Cephas.”* Which means “rock.” Then in Matthew 4:18-22 and Luke 5, Jesus called the fishermen Simon and Andrew *to follow Him* and to become *fishers of men*. Andrew is seldom mentioned apart from his brother Simon and the other disciples in the Bible. He’s known for being the one who brought people to Jesus, including his brother Simon. Yes, they were among the first disciples of Jesus. So, are you an Andrew? Are you telling others about Jesus? Are you bringing your family, friends, and neighbors to church with you? Are you telling others, *“Come and see”*? Surely you must know someone who doesn’t come to church. Why not make that person your priority and ask them to come with you next week?

A game warden wondered how a certain man caught so many fish. So, he went out one day with the man in the man’s boat. They got out a way when the man picked up a stick of dynamite, lit it and threw it into the water. After it exploded, he began scooping up the stunned fish using his net. The warden told the man that wasn’t permitted. And as the warden continued to speak, the man calmly reached for another stick of dynamite, lit it, and put it in the warden’s hand and said, *“Are you going to just sit there and talk? Or are you going to fish?”*

Well, that’s often the problem with evangelism. You just sit there, while someone else is doing it. You say it’s not for you. Well, have you ever tried showing someone how God is working through you by being an example for them? That’s witnessing! You *can* help change another’s life. Remember, I began by saying, *“Nothing can beat having a first-hand experience.”* That’s the way it is with witnessing. It’s hard to tell someone about Jesus if you haven’t experienced Jesus yourself! And it’s hard to say, *“come and see”* when *you* haven’t seen for yourself!

So, what you have to do is, have a first-hand experience with God! Jesus is the only one who can help you with that. It goes beyond all human understanding. But it should reassure you, Jesus is never too busy to hear from you when you call to Him. And when Jesus says to you, *“Come and see”* that’s your invitation to have a first-hand experience with Him. Have you taken time to do it? Will you? I pray your answer is “Yes.” And that you will become another Philip by saying to your family, friends, and neighbors, *“I saw. Now, you ‘Come and see.’”* AMEN