

March 12, 2023 – Lent 3 – Year A – John 4:5-42 – “Come And See” – AGNUS DEI

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to St. John, the fourth chapter.

So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?” Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”

Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.” The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!” The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worship-ers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you want?” or, “Why are you speaking with her?” Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” They left the city and were on their way to him.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, “Rabbi, eat something.” But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who

sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

Grace, mercy and peace are yours from the Triune God. Amen.

Come and see is a favorite expression of the Gospel writer John, at least it appears 4 times.

In 1:39 some potential disciples ask Jesus where he's staying; Jesus answers, Come and see.

Also in 1:46 skeptical Nathanael wonders if anything good can come out of Nazareth. His brother Philip offers he should come and see.

We will read 11:34 on an upcoming Sunday morning of where Jesus asks Mary and Martha where they have laid dead Lazarus. They say, Come and see.

Today of course the woman at the well tells her kinspeople, "**Come and see** a man who told me everything I have ever done!"

Similarly, St. John the letter writer bears witness to Jesus the word of life whom he has seen for himself, heard, looked on, touched and handled with his own hands.

We can learn only so much by third party intelligence. John wants us to experience Jesus for ourselves. The woman wanted her Samaritan people to experience Jesus for themselves. "Come and see" is analogous to, "Come, find out for yourself."

To that end Jesus makes the point of coming to us first.

He came to the woman first, breaking social and religious restrictions to engage a female stranger in conversation. He then came to the Samaritans, breaking his own rule to confine his mission to the lost sheep of Israel.

It is how grace works. God through Christ makes the first move, without even our consent. He comes in order to experience us, just as we are. He doesn't want to change us so much as he wants to know us. Afterward we will better get to know and experience him.

Last Sunday we read from the Old Testament about God's call to our spiritual ancestor, Abram. We had two different text studies last week, one here at the church and one at Sunset Grille. They were lively discussions. People wondered about how different individuals at each of the

studies had ever experienced God speaking to them, like Jesus to Nicodemus or like he stops to speak to the woman at the well.

One person shared deeply and vulnerably how that after a time of desperate prayer the voice of God—which they described as “the gentlest voice I have ever heard”—how the voice of God brought reassurance and peace during a time of terrible personal tragedy and loss.

One person who once faced a job decision shared how God had said, (I paraphrase), “You can choose this new career path or you can choose family cohesion and stability, but you can’t choose both.”

Several shared moments from childhood where God had made Godself known to them for the very first time.

For a number of years I was locked into a certain spiritual mindset that demanded to know where and how the Holy Spirit was moving so I could be sure to be in on the action. After one long season of spiritual silence, even mediocrity and monotony, I prayed with frustration and exasperation, “God, where is your presence, where are you moving and who are you speaking to?” Clear as a bell the Inner Voice responded, “Where am I not present? And where am I not moving? And to whom am I not speaking? I am present and moving and speaking to everyone everywhere all the time!”

Now that is exactly what Paul said in his letter to the Romans. God is everywhere at all times speaking and revealing himself to humankind, at the very least by means of “his eternal power and divine nature.”

The Psalmist says in Psalm 19,

¹ *The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.*

² *Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.*

³ *There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;*

⁴ *yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.*

Also to the Athenians Paul preached on Mars Hill that “²⁶From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, ²⁷so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us.” (Acts 19).

The point is that Jesus is ever present, first to speak, engaging us in conversation and sticking with us all the way through. He stuck with Nicodemus all through the night, answering his

bothering questions. He sat beside the woman at the well through the heat of day and answered her questions as well.

It's not an exact science, this business of hearing the voice of God. So called inspiration has been used as a cover for human ego, and the Voice has been misrepresented in some wild ways.

Sometimes sincere people mistakenly listen and say that they heard from God. When Lynn and I were young marrieds, she once announced God told her she wasn't pregnant. I confirmed it and said God told me the same thing. Somehow the voice of God never got through to our impending little baby however.

In spite of our inadequacies to properly hear, Jesus is always present, always speaking—guiding, guarding, answering pressing concerns. Always.

Sometimes it feels like he's absent or that he only will help you in the distant future. But Jesus says, "Look around you now, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting now."

If we follow his example with Nicodemus, Jesus answers off subject. Nicodemus asks one thing; Jesus answers something else. If we look to his conversation with the woman at the well, Jesus answers on point but speaks directly to the issues of her life and in her heart.

In the same way, whatever Christ says, he speaks to us exactly the things we need to hear.

One person shared they were worried sick to know if a recently deceased family member were truly with Jesus in heaven. The Lord reassured them in the deep recesses of their heart: "She is with me. She is with me."

Sometimes all we need to hear from Jesus is, "I love you. I am with you. I love you. I am with you. And you are with me."

Hear this message spoken through the mouthpiece of Isaiah:

*Fear thou not; for I am with thee;
be not dismayed; for I am thy God;
I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee;
yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.*

If we listen, we hear these kinds of words when we come to church. What else do we need to hear?

We need words like, "Your sins are forgiven."

We need words from the hymns we sing, like

*Come near to worship! Come with faith,
bow down to God who gives us breath:
God is our shepherd, God alone;
we are his people, all his own.*

We need words we say to one another: "God's peace be with you. God's peace."

We need words spoken at the holy meal: "This is my body broken for you. This is my blood that was shed for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Also, "The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you for life that is abundant and eternal."

We need the words of blessing and sending: "God, the giver of love, + Christ, the resurrection and the life, and the Holy Spirit of rebirth, now bless you on your Lenten journey." Also, "Go in peace. Serve in love."

They are not idle words that are spoken. They are gospel words of empowerment and influence. Whenever I may say,

"The Lord bless you and keep you.

"The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

"The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace."

Whenever I may say those words or others like them, I expect them to take hold of you and have their sway. I expect that by their speaking God makes you a different person than you were before. I expect them to happen.

Then you will be sent to serve and say to others you know and love, "Come with me and see a man, the Messiah, who told me exactly all the words I needed to hear." I also expect that in heaven they will come to sing about you as we now sing and mention the woman at the well. Amen.