

South Bay Community Church
Sermon Reflections
Chosen : Come and See
04 & 05 February 2023
Lead Pastor Tammy Long

Scripture Text: John 1:35-40

Listen Up – I Have Decided to Follow Jesus: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCgHLqJubVg>

Sermon Preamble

This is the beginning of a new sermon series we are calling Chosen. Christianity is not about a religion, but a relationship with Jesus. It's ALL about Jesus. The truth is, everything in the Old Testament points forward to Jesus, and everything in the New Testament points back to Jesus. Jesus is not only the center of our joy; Jesus is the center of it All! But before we can experience the joy of a relationship with Jesus, there's the matter of choosing and the matter of being chosen. In other words, first there is an invitation and then there is a decision. The key phrases for the disciples and for us are: "What do you want?" and "Come and see."

There is an invitation, and then there is a decision

But before we can experience the joy of a relationship with Jesus, there's the matter of choosing and the matter of being chosen. In other words, first there is an invitation and then there is a decision as illustrated in John 1:35-40.

³⁵The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. ³⁶As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, "Look! There is the Lamb of God!" ³⁷When John's two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸Jesus looked around and saw them following. "What do you want?" he asked them. They replied, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" ³⁹"Come and see," he said. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place where he was staying, and they remained with him the rest of the day. ⁴⁰Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus."

This scripture is about two different men named John. The writer of this gospel is named John. He later became one of Jesus' closest disciples, and wrote the gospel named John. The second John is John the Baptist. If you recall from our Christmas series, Expect the Unexpected, John the Baptist was the baby born to the older couple, Zechariah the Priest, and his wife Elizabeth. Now thirty years later, John the Baptist is an evangelist, who does his ministry on the outskirts of town. The prophet Isaiah foretold of John the Baptist's coming as a voice crying in the wilderness; to make way for the Lord. This is exactly what John the Baptist was doing as foretold by Isaiah. John the Baptist is calling people to repent of their sins and to prepare for the coming Messiah.

Acknowledging and Revering the Lamb of God

John the Baptist now has disciples who were following his teachings and working alongside him calling people to repent. One day while John the Baptist is baptizing, he notices Jesus is waiting in the crowd to be baptized. Scripture tells us that at first John the Baptist is hesitant to baptize Jesus because he feels unworthy, but Jesus insists. Jesus is to be a living example and model for humanity.

The day before John baptizes Jesus, he sees Jesus from a distance. John the Baptist acknowledges Jesus as the Lamb of God. ²⁹"Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" ³⁰He is the one I was talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.' ³¹I did not recognize him as the Messiah, but I have been baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel." ³²Then John testified, 'I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting upon him. ³³I didn't know he was the one, but when God sent me to baptize with water, he told me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and rest is the one who will baptize with

the Holy Spirit.' I saw this happen to Jesus, so I testify that he is the Chosen One of God. ’’ (John 1:29-34).

Can you imagine hearing that testimony; a declaration like this from someone you deeply trust or someone you have been working side by side with for God? And while it took some time to process what John the Baptist was saying, everyone would have paused to take it all in. John the Baptist was naming Jesus as the Chosen one of God: The Anointed One and the long-awaited Messiah on whom the Children of Israel had been waiting for hundreds of years.

The people waiting to be baptized would have understood the metaphorical reference of Lamb of God, too. Even if they didn't grasp all its meaning in entirety, they would have thought about the temple lambs who were part of a sacrifice ritual for sin. They may have thought about the Passover lamb from the Exodus story they celebrated each year, and how God saved them from death. They may have thought about Isaiah's prophecy about the Messiah as a suffering servant, like a sheep led to slaughter.

John the Baptist's testimony was a very big deal, especially coming from John, the gospel author. The Good News Translation (GNT) supports the final affirmation by John, the author. It reads: I have seen it," said John, "and I tell you that he is the Son of God" (John 1:34).

Jesus asked the disciples, What Do You Want?

“³⁵The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. ³⁶As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, ‘Look! There is the Lamb of God!’ ³⁷When John’s two disciples heard this; they followed Jesus. ³⁸Jesus looked around and saw them following. ‘What do you want?’ he asked them” (John 1:35-38).

There are so many ways to picture the scene of Jesus asking, “What Do You Want?” Imagine yourself being there with John the Baptist's disciples. Did the disciples follow with bold strides of determination – like they were on a mission? Or were they more timid; following from a distance mustering up the nerve to speak to the Chosen One? Were they eager, curious with open minds taking John at his word? Or was their attitude more skeptical such as “I need to see this for myself.”

We weren't there so we don't know, but we can use our holy imagination to contemplate the scene. We all have different personalities and unique ways of approaching Jesus. However, Jesus is open to them all. Friends, that's Good News! We can come to Jesus exactly as we are, and when we do, Jesus asks each of us the same question he asked these two disciples.

The New International Version (NIV) and the New Living Translation (NLT) use the text, “What do you want?” This can sound a bit harsh in our vernacular, almost like Jesus is annoyed. For many, being followed is not a positive thing. At the very least it's disturbing, and at the most, it's an invasion of privacy and threatening.

The word want as used in the original Greek (dzay-teh'-o) means to seek, search for, desire, or require. This is one of those times when it is helpful to get a broader understanding of what Jesus meant by asking, What do you want? If we compare other Biblical translations or look at the original language to do a translation comparison, Bibles translate this question in one of three ways: What do you want? (NLT), What are you seeking? (NKJV), What are you looking for? (NRSV and NABV).

The above translations illustrate how translators struggle to find the right word. There's a lot to what seems like a simple question. And, if you know Jesus, you know there's no such thing as a simple question. There are always layers.

Jesus is inviting the disciples and each of us to check what we are really after

The disciples may have been trying to check Jesus out, but Jesus was also inviting them to check themselves out. Challenging them to think about what it was they were REALLY after. It's a question Jesus asks each of us, as well. In fact, it's a good question to ask in general about life itself? What is it that you really want in life? What are you really seeking, desiring, wanting, and why?

Then Jesus' question takes it to another level. What are you seeking from Jesus? If you are a Jesus follower, why are you following him? Really? In those very few words, Jesus asked them, and he asks us

to really ponder these questions and try to go beyond the most obvious, churchy responses. Jesus always challenges us to go deeper – with why?

We are spiritual beings with spiritual needs

Some years ago, George Gallup, the famous survey polls guy, spoke at Princeton Theological Seminary. He shared that everybody has a core set of basic spiritual needs: (a) The need to believe that life is meaningful and has a purpose. (b) The need for a sense of deep relationship and deeper community. (c) The need to be appreciated and respected. (d) The need to be listened to and heard (and add to that - to be known). (e) The need to feel one is growing spiritually

Mr. Gallup's focus was on spiritual needs. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a French writer said, "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience; We are spiritual beings having a human experience. To grow spiritually, we must address our spiritual needs. Much of what we struggle with in life, is at the very core, a spiritual issue. When we ponder the questions Jesus asks, "What do you want?" and "What do we want to see?", how many of these core spiritual needs come to the surface? Jesus addresses every single need on this list. Jesus' questions hang in the air for the disciples then and for us now. Jesus wants to meet all your needs, so take some time to hold these questions.

When the disciples respond, they desire to spend time with and learn from Jesus

Many feel that how the disciples answer Jesus' question is unusual. After Jesus asks them what they want, the scripture says, they replied "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"

Upon first read, it feels like they don't answer the question at all. Or it is like they are trying to change the subject, with chit chat. But, they do answer the question, albeit indirectly. First, they acknowledge Jesus as Rabbi, which means they recognize his authority as a teacher. Second, to ask where he is staying is a polite and implied way of saying they would like to spend time with Jesus. To get to know him, to be in his company, to fellowship with him. In essence, they are saying what they are seeking is Jesus himself. To which Jesus responds with an indirect answer of his own. He simply says, "Come and See."

Jesus invites the disciples to come and see and abide with Jesus in deep communion

Continuing with our scripture, we read, "³⁹It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place where he was staying, and they remained with him the rest of the day. ⁴⁰Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus" (John 1:39-40).

Up until now, we just know these were two of John the Baptist's disciples, but now the gospel writer tells us one of them is Andrew. There is good reason to believe the second disciple is the gospel writer John, himself. These two disciples followed John the Baptist's direction to pursue Jesus. Jesus invites them to "come and see" where he is staying. In other words, He invites them to his place to draw closer to him personally and to get to know him.

The scripture says it was about four in the afternoon, which is a very specific detail. This suggests the encounter was etched in memory as a notable, life-turning point. We also learn they remained with Jesus for the rest of the day.

The word "remained" is important and a choice word to pay attention to. They didn't do one of those drive by visits, where they stopped by and after the pleasantries said their goodbyes. The Greek word "remained" has a deeper connotation and nuance. The meaning of the word "remained" translated in Greek means "to abide." To abide means to linger together, fellowship. It's a term of intimate connection and communion of deeply being and dwelling together.

Remember what Jesus said in John 15? ⁵"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. ⁹"I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love."(John 15:5,9).

Jesus meets their needs physically and spiritually. So, they abide with Jesus for hours. Wouldn't it have been cool to be a fly on the wall? What did they talk about? What questions did they ask? How did Jesus answer? The scripture doesn't specify. It could be that short answers were the only answers they needed for this time. (You know Jesus never tells more than we need to know). Maybe they talked about the Scriptures and with Jesus' understanding, it made for a rich dialogue that probably blew them away. Like most of us, they may have talked about their work with John the Baptist, the state of their world under Roman occupation and the desperate need for the Messiah. They talked about the same things we can talk to Jesus about in prayer.

Remaining in fellowship involves sharing a meal together

Given the hour they began, I'm sure they also shared a meal together. Breaking bread together was part of the culture, and mealtimes were much more than occasions for nourishment and sustenance. Being welcomed at a table to eat meant unity, fellowship, and intimacy. It meant listening, sharing, and friendship.

A big part of Jesus' ministry was around eating and drinking, either by participating as a guest, or by showing hospitality like he does in our text today. Author Robert Karris makes this observation about Luke's gospel specifically. He notes, in Luke's Gospel, Jesus is either going to a meal, is at a meal, or coming from a meal!

Are you seeing some themes here? When Jesus says Come and See -he's offering a relationship because that's who Jesus is! He is all about relationships, intimacy, and friendship. He reaches out to us, while we are reaching out to him. In fact, Jesus is reaching out to us even before we reach out to him, we just don't recognize that is what's going on.

Jesus chooses us and invites us into relationship

It was not a coincidence that Jesus was walking by when John the Baptist points him out to the disciples. In John 15:16, Jesus says these words to his disciples, "You didn't choose me. I chose you." By the time we choose Jesus, he has already chosen us and been at work in our lives, inviting us to draw closer. Jesus is inviting us to fellowship with him, inviting us to get to know him better. and inviting us to follow him as a disciple. That is what Jesus offers in this scripture and what he continues to offer to you and me. He extended an invitation for these disciples to come and see, and they did! They didn't just take John the Baptist's word for it, they had their own encounter with Jesus, and they came to know Jesus for themselves.

African American Churches accepted the invitation of Jesus to "come and see" Jesus for themselves

Thinking about Black History month, this scripture also describes the story of the Black Christian experience as well. It wasn't that those who were enslaved bought into the religion of the oppressor or that it was thrust down their throats. Actually, it's quite the opposite. They were smart enough to know what they heard and saw just didn't add up to a loving God. Something was definitely wrong.

Frederick Douglass articulated what was already deeply known in the body, minds, hearts, and spirits of our ancestors. This is why Douglass' words resonate so deeply. He wrote (in his autobiography): "I love the pure, peaceable, and impartial Christianity of Christ; I therefore hate the corrupt, slaveholding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial, and hypocritical Christianity of this land. Indeed, I can see no reason, but the most deceitful one, for calling the religion of this land Christianity. I look upon it as the climax of all misnomers, the boldest of all frauds, and the grossest of all libels."

So how did we get here? How has the Black Christian church grown so strong over time? Our African American foremothers and forefathers accepted Jesus' invitation to "come and see," to meet Jesus for themselves. And in Jesus, they found the strength to persevere, the resilience to keep on keeping on, the inspiration and charge to keep fighting for justice, and the intimacy of a Friend in Jesus who heard their cries and captured their tears. They became convinced, committed, and decided to follow Jesus, not

someone's oppressive religion or destructive applications of the Bible. They found Jesus himself, just like the disciples Jesus invited home that day.

When the disciples asked Jesus where he was staying Jesus answered, "Come and See". He makes the same offer to us today. However, it's not a one and done reality. Jesus invites us to "Come and See" every day.

No matter how much we may know about Jesus, there is always an invitation for us to "Come and See"

That's what this new series is all about. No matter how much we think we know about Jesus, there is always more to learn, always an invitation to Come and See. There is always an invitation to remain, abide and grow deeper in our relationship, because we are already chosen by Jesus. The question is will we choose Jesus in return?

This message invites you to "Come and See." We will begin with a meal around Jesus' table because that's what communion is. Jesus is the host and he invites us to share the meal he offers to us. We remember what he has done for us, and get a foretaste of the meal, the joyful feast, we will share at his banquet table one day.

Like the disciples who remained with Jesus, God's Word tells us who will remain with God. Many will come from east and west and from north and south and sit at the table in the Kingdom of God at the Lord's Table. Our Savior invites those who trust him to share the feast he has prepared. And he is present with us now. Immanuel, God with us. Jesus is our host. Now that Jesus has invited us to his table of communion as a forever family, let's accept the invite to, "Come and See."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS INCLUDING FOR USE IN FAMILY GROUP

Sermon Preamble

-But before we can experience the joy of a relationship with Jesus, there's the matter of choosing and the matter of being chosen. First, there is an invitation and then there is the decision. Now that you have decided to improve your relationship with God, what action(s) will you take? No churchy answers but a commitment to something you can maintain.

There is an invitation and then there is a decision in being Chosen.

-Why did John the Baptist preach about repenting? How important is it to repent of our sins and why?
-Jesus wanted to have a relationship with the disciples as He wants to do with each and every one of us. Do you have a heartfelt 2-minute speech saying why it is important for you to have a relationship with Jesus? How does your explanation make it all about Jesus and not yourself?

Jesus asked the disciples, What Do You Want?

-What are you seeking from Jesus? If you are a Jesus follower, why are you following him? In those very few words, Jesus asked them, and now he asks us to really ponder these questions and go beyond the most obvious, churchy responses. Jesus always challenges us to go deeper – with why?

Jesus is inviting the disciples and each of us to check what we are really after

-What is it that you really want in life? What are you really seeking, desiring, wanting, and why?
-If you are a follower of Jesus, really why are you following Jesus?

We are spiritual beings with spiritual needs

-What is your core set of spiritual needs? Why?

The disciples respond desiring to spend time with and learn from Jesus

-In what ways do you develop a more personal, close relationship by learning from Jesus?

Jesus invites the disciples the come and see to abide with Jesus in deep communion

-When Jesus says Come and See - he's offering a relationship because that's who Jesus is! He is all about relationships, intimacy, friendship, and our master teacher. What steps or actions are you willing to invest in so you can answer what this scripture means to you?

-What can you do to help others, "Come and See?"

Jesus chooses us and invites us into relationship

-Jesus reaches out to us before we reach out to him. In many ways, we are like the disciples, checking Jesus out, without recognizing Jesus is checking us out. What changes can you make to be more cognizant about checking ourselves rather than trying to check out Jesus?

Remaining in fellowship involves sharing a meal together

-Why is sharing the Lord's Supper in regular communion important in a close relationship of intimacy with Jesus?

African American Churches accepted the invitation of Jesus to "come and see" Jesus for themselves

-In what ways should we remember and learn from the foremothers and forefathers in the African American Church who accepted the invitation of Jesus to "come and see" for themselves?