

'Come and See' -- John 1:35-51 –
St. David's, Jan 15, 2012;
Rev. Dawn Griffiths

When was the last time you were invited to 'come and see' something exciting? I hope it was recently!

'Come and see!' is an invitation to share something good, isn't it?

Come and see my wedding pictures! Come and see my new grandchild! Come and see what I found!

When we find something special, we want to share our joy and excitement.

Rob and I love living in Newfoundland, and since we've moved here we've invited many people to 'come and see'. We've had friends and relatives from all over Canada and from Britain take us up on the offer. It's a good thing we have 3 spare bedrooms, because we've needed them all!

One of our favourite places to show our friends is the trail from Signal Hill down into the Battery. What gorgeous views! One particularly memorable day when walked this trail there were four naval vessels, two from Canada, one from the US and one from Germany leaving through the Narrows to go out on manoeuvres, the sailors lined up on deck below us as we watched.

Often our friends have found the trail more strenuous than they expected, but all have said it was definitely worth the hike. And for the shoppers, finding the craft shops in the Battery is the icing on the cake.

We love taking people to Cape Spear where we enjoy showing off the lighthouse, the history and the view, and are thrilled when the season is right and we can see pitcher plants growing or whales so close we can hear them.

Other favourite places to invite people to come and see are The Rooms and Quidi Vidi; Twillingate and Gros Morne; seafood restaurants and Barbour Living Heritage Village. Then there's Bowering Park and Bonavista, the Burin and St. Anthony, Cape St. Mary's and Cataracts Provincial Park; the list goes on and on and on...

It's wonderful to tell people about these places, then send them off to explore, and later hear how much they enjoyed their trip and that they want to come back and see more! It's even better when we can share the experience with them.

'Come and see... Come and share our excitement about this place and our joy in showing it to you!'

It's natural to want to share our excitement and joy, isn't it? That's what Andrew and Philip were doing in the scripture passage we read today.

Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist. He first met Jesus when Jesus came to the Jordan River to hear John preach and to be baptized by John. Andrew was so impressed with Jesus that he accepted Jesus' invitation to come home with him. It didn't take Andrew long to realize there was something very special about Jesus. He ended up spending the whole day with him. When he finally left Jesus, Andrew was so excited he immediately went to find his older brother Simon, and invite him to come and see the messiah. He couldn't wait to share the good news with his brother.

Andrew isn't as well-known as his older brother. We don't often hear about him in the gospels. He

holds centre stage on only three occasions during Jesus' ministry. Each time he is introducing someone to Jesus. Andrew took great joy in bringing others to Jesus. He had good news, and he wanted to share it!

Philip couldn't keep the good news about Jesus to himself either. He met Jesus shortly after Andrew did, and travelled north with Jesus to the Sea of Galilee. When they got to Philip's home town he immediately went to his friend Nathaniel to tell him his good news – he had found the messiah! Nathaniel was sceptical. It sounded too good to be true. He didn't believe that the long-awaited messiah would come in his lifetime! And when the messiah did finally come, it wouldn't be from a hick town like Nazareth! Nathaniel was giving Philip a hard time.

But Philip didn't get upset. He was too filled with excitement and joy about his good news, and he wanted his friend to know Jesus too. He didn't even try to argue with Nathaniel. He just said 'Come and see'. Come see for yourself!

When Nathaniel met Jesus he did see for himself. He too followed Jesus.

What is it these four men Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip and Nathanael – and so many others – found in Jesus?

The answer is in Jesus first words to the two disciples of John who were following him..When Jesus turned to them and asked 'What do you want?', they couldn't put into words what they needed or wanted; but at some deep level they knew Jesus could help them find what they were looking for. So when Jesus invited them to 'Come and see,' they did...

Jesus question that day strikes a chord with us all, I think. 'What do you want?' We all want something, don't we? Maybe we're not always sure what it is we feel we're missing, but we know we need something. There are many things we need at different times in our lives, but I think they can all be contained in the two concepts of *security* (control over the uncertainties of life) and *dignity* (knowing our lives have meaning; that our life matters, that we are worth something.)

Advertisers make a good living by telling us that what we need to make us feel secure, satisfied and content is a new car, a bigger house and more money; the right deodorant, the right breath mint and the right credit card. With these and a few other things, we'll be in control of our lives. We're told our lives have dignity and meaning when we're successful: by which is meant: when we wear the right clothes, cultivate the right friends, land the right job and live in the right part of town.

But there comes a point when we realize that things don't bring us security, and our dignity and self-worth don't depend on what others think of us. We realize that we can't buy love, or hope. We can't own joy or purchase peace.

At that point we begin to look for something that's secure and lasting, something that has meaning beyond the moment. And if we're listening, we hear Jesus say 'Come and see... Come, follow me!' 'Come share my joy. Come know my peace and forgiveness. Come and be filled with hope! Come and realize you are precious and loved and important – not for what you have or what you can give me, not for what you can do for me, but just because you're you!'

Jesus offers us the security of knowing we are loved just as we are. We don't have to earn his love. As Paul tells us: God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us! (Romans 5:8)

Andrew and Simon Peter, Philip and Nathanael, all recognized that Jesus offered them what they had been looking for. When he invited them to follow they didn't hesitate. What they found was so wonderful they just had to share the good news!

I have something I want you to think about. I'm going to give you a minute to do that. Then, at the end of the service I'd like you to share your answer with somebody else, and hear what they have to say.

I want you to remember one example of how your church or your faith has made your life better; made you feel more secure or your life more meaningful.' Just before I give you that minute to think about it, I'll share with you a few answers from other people:

We read this morning the psalmist telling us of the security of knowing God was with him, caring for him, no matter where he went: *If I ascend to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I...settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall hold me fast.* (Psalm 139:8-10)

And from some people in other congregations I've served in:

'My church is my family now. None of my family lives close, but my church family is here for me, and I'm here for them.'

'I grew up in a home where nobody said 'I love you' and discipline was very strict. For a lot of years I couldn't believe anyone could love me. I thought I was unlovable. By the time I was in my thirties my life seemed unbearable. One day I was so down I couldn't see any way out of my unhappiness but to kill myself. In desperation I prayed 'God, are you really there? I need help!' I didn't really expect an answer, but suddenly I felt warmth flowing through my shivering body, and the most amazing love filling me with the assurance that I was not alone, that I was loved and lovable, and that I would never be alone. Twenty years later, I still know God loves me. It's changed my life!'

Now, take one minute to remember an example of how your church or your faith has made your life better; made you feel more secure or your life more meaningful.'

I know we don't often talk about our faith, but I want you to share your story with someone for three reasons...

First, remembering God's work and love in our lives nourishes our own faith. Second, sharing our faith story builds up other peoples' faith. Third, it's too exciting not to share!

In a world where the bad news is front and centre, blaring from TV screens and shouting from newspaper headlines we're called to share the good news...

Let's be like Andrew and Philip, inviting others to come and see...

Come and see what God has done in my life.

Come and share what God has done in yours.

Thanks be to God for His amazing love for us.

Amen.