

Come and See: Lamb of God & Lamb Shish Kabobs

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We are continuing our series in The Story this morning. Jesus' ministry based on the gospel of John is today's topic. As you know, the Johannine gospel is distinctively different from the Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which are called the Synoptic gospels. For example, if Luke is the master of the deft, fleeting allusion, John is the master of the carefully framed, luminous image that shines brilliantly against a dark canvas and lingers in the imagination. I like to compare these two to the painters. John's narrative technique is analogous to the visual artistry of Rembrandt's portraits while Luke's narrative to Renoir. I can name three primary differences of John's gospel: first, seven "I am" Jesus' self-referential statements; devoid of miracles and parables; and **three** Passovers while the Synoptic gospels have **only one Passover**. Concerning Passover, This is a striking difference in John's Gospel and related to my sermon this morning.

Some of you are probably looking at my title for this sermon and puzzled a bit. So, what's the connection between Lamb of God and lamb shish kabobs? You will get to see as I progress my sermon.

BODY – Step through John's Portrayal of Jesus, get audience buy-in, sofe, not personal yet

[12 min]

As Scripture we just read, Jesus said to John's two disciples, "Come and see" when they asked him where he was staying. The Greek reads (ερχεσθε κα οψεσθε): **a polite invitation and definite promise** (future middle indicative οψεσθε from οραω, not imperative ιδετε. Jesus invites each of us to come and think; come and experience; and come and wonder for ourselves who he is. So, "Come and see" is God's invitation for fellowship and communion with the one who made us in love for love. **I want you to pay attention to this phrase because later Philip uses the same in English translation.**

Jesus summons Philip, who was from Bethsaida to follow him. Bethsaida in Hebrew means "house of fishing." Names usually appear in the Bible on purpose. Bethsaida is depicted as a place threatened and cursed by Jesus in Matthew 11:21 and Luke 10:13 because of its unrepentance. Yet, Jesus brought Andrew, Simon and Philip into favor with him out of a place so ungodly and wicked, and honored them so highly as to make them disciples. Isn't it astonishing?

Another remarkable account of Jesus' calling is his encounter with the Samaritan woman as in this morning's Scripture reading. Jesus intentionally went to Samaria on a rescue mission. Jesus' public ministry was centered mainly in Galilee and in Jerusalem. But on one occasion early on in his ministry he decided to cross through Samaria. The Jews hated the Samaritans and denigrated women. Breaking racism and sexism, Jesus went to meet the Samaritan woman at the well. She was the first woman Jesus revealed his identity as Messiah by using "I am" statement as in v. 26. This "I Am," is identical to YHWH's self-revelation Moses. "I am who I am." (cf. Exod.3:12, 14).

Where are you at this point of your life? Are you at the bottomless pit of trouble? Are you in deep shameful place? Or are you simply tattered by many problems of life? It does not matter where you are now as long as you accept Jesus' invitation and Jesus redeems you.

We all have wounds whether visible or invisible in our hearts by past failures, pains and fears. What do you do with your wounds? Would you coil and get depressed? Or would you bring your wounds to the cross? Jesus invites us to come and see.

Philip, a new disciple of Jesus, immediately seeks out his friend Nathaniel and declares, without providing evidence or explanation, "We have found the one about whom Moses wrote in the Law, and also the prophets: Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth" (John 1:45). Perhaps he did not know with certainty that Jesus was truly the Son of God and Savior of the world. I don't know about you but for me when I discover something very important and astounding, I have an irresistible urge to share it with my family and friends. That's what Andrew, Philip, and the Samaritan woman did.

Philip at first failed to convince his friend Nathaniel that he had found the Messiah. Nathaniel was very skeptical, expressing his sarcasm, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Let's take a pause here.

Perhaps we are like Nathaniel. We reject others (or at least keep them distant from us) because they come from some place or position we don't like or find fault with. I think Nathaniel's remark was legitimate and valid in his time because the Jews expected that the Messiah would come out of Bethlehem. You will face the similar valid sarcasm and negativity when you want to

share the good news with your family and friends. Of course, questions would be different. Perhaps a question like “If there is God, why do so many people suffer unjustly?”

Look at Philip’s response. Rather than argue with his friend, Philip takes the wiser strategy of inviting Nathaniel to “come and see” for himself who this Jesus claimed to be. Clever arguments rarely win people to the gospel, but an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ can transform one’s life forever.

Philip doesn’t defend nor brush off Nathaniel. Instead, he shows confident humility by saying come and see. Philip simply replies “**Come and see**” in v. 46. This phrase in Greek is ερχου καὶ ἰδε indicating **present middle imperative (come on) and second active imperative (and see at once)**.

Philip invites Nathaniel to explore Jesus together. I know a lot of you do not belong to small groups. How do you explore Jesus alone? When you get stuck, where do you go for answers? Some of you may say that you go to the Bible to seek an answer. How do you know you read the Bible with the correct hermeneutical lens? How do you know your portrayal of Jesus is NOT the reflection of your own image? I wholeheartedly encourage you to plug into a small group for support and spiritual transformation.

Likewise, the Samaritan woman after that life-changing encounter, she goes back to her village and tells everyone she knows, “Come and see a man who told me everything I’ve ever done” (Jn. 4:29). She became the first evangelist in the gospel of John. She went and told her people about Jesus and brought them to him, so they could see and hear for themselves. A foreign, single woman who had had five husbands, and was now living with a man who was not her husband

was the one Jesus chose to bring a town in Samaria to him so that they could say, “We have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world” (v. 42).

Let me further explore Nathaniel. What did he find in Jesus when he accepted Philip’s invitation to Jesus, deciding to go see Jesus for himself? When he did, the rest is history. Jesus acted like he knew him already, even though as far as we know they’d never met. Just by seeing Nathanael under a fig tree (Was he praying? Reading the Scriptures?) Jesus knows he’s an Israelite in whom there’s no deceit. Jesus spoke a word to Nathaniel and it set his heart ablaze with wonder!

Nathanael is so amazed that Jesus seems to already know him that immediately he confesses Jesus as the Son of God and the King of Israel. Jesus revealed to Nathaniel the innermost thoughts and desire of his heart. Nathaniel was hungry for knowledge of God. He really wanted to know God personally. God places in every heart a longing and desire to know the One who created us in love for love.

Here we see a great social networking model. I can see your eye brows raised. Social networking? You think it is a new concept in the 21st century, don’t you? When I say social network, what comes to your mind first? Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook or LinkedIn or Twitter? You are wrong. Jesus created social networking thousands of years ago in the first century! He is the master of social network by building the everlasting community. For example, Jesus called four fishermen—Simon, Andrew, James, and John—to make them use their net and work on fishing people.

I like to think that social networking is based on a progressive structure that encourages people to express their individuality as well as exchange similar interests to cultivate productive relationship. Can you see that is what Jesus exactly did when he recruited his diverse group of disciples to build a community? In other words, Jesus formed a strong community of different individuals marked by a robust fellowship with friends or associates. What is the binding force of this group? It is Jesus.

Who is Jesus for you? The author of John calls Jesus the *Lamb of God*. This theme of the Lamb of God, the Passover symbolism, actually shot through the entirety of John's gospel. From the very first scene, when Jesus enters the story for the first time, John sees him coming and looks and says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" in verse 29. Passover symbolism is particularly pervasive in John's gospel, coming to a climax in the passion narrative, where Jesus' crucifixion takes place on the day of preparation for Passover (19:14), not on Passover itself as in the Synoptic gospels.

Why is the story so different? How do we account for these differences in terms of the way of the story-telling developed? The effect of this chronological shift is to align Jesus' death with the slaughter of the Passover lambs. Literally Jesus was crucified on the day thousands of lambs were slaughtered all at one time in Jerusalem. John's gospel forces us dramatically through the storytelling mode to think of Jesus as a Passover lamb.

Jesus, "the Lamb of God" embodies in his death the true significance of the Passover and exodus events. The blood of the *Passover Lamb* (Exodus 12) delivered the Israelites in Egypt from

death. The blood of Jesus, the true Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7), delivers us from everlasting death and destruction. In Jesus, John saw the true and only sacrifice which can deliver us from sin.

Social networking community thrives on discussion; discussion defines a social network. In fact, discussion can define what Jesus Christ was all about. In the New Testament there are numerous occasions where Jesus engaged others in discussion. Discussion is key to his ministry. Jesus long before the invention of the computer, internet and website technology exactly knew how to get his community going. **The Kingdom of God is built upon the principle of connecting with those who do not know about Jesus and the sharing of the Gospel.**

Jesus' invitation to follow him, to come and see turned out to be a hallmark of his ministry as he welcomed prostitutes and tax collectors, touched lepers and even dead bodies for the hospitality of Jesus was controversial. He chafed against the limits of social propriety his hospitality knew no limit. It was not just indiscriminate: it was promiscuous He received Pharisees and sinners alike, and often his sharpest criticism was reserved for the former!

His welcome was gracious, he shared words and relationship, for he had nothing else to give, fancy meals were provided by others, and yet somehow this guest was the host bringing the love of God to the conversation enfolding his hearers in grace, giving and receiving at the same time.

Come and see.....Jesus invitation is central to the incarnation. Through his promiscuous hospitality, Jesus reenacts the gracious being of the Triune God. We live not in a world of

divisions, but in a universe tightly bound and called into being by the God who desires intimacy with us. I know one of our 5 core values is radical hospitality. Cook lamb shish kabobs and invite your friends, especially who are skeptical of Jesus to share the story of the Lamb of God. People usually take their guards down when they share a meal. Jesus invited us first when we were skeptical.

APPLICATION – Now that you’ve got buy-in, get personal [5 min]

This is all Jesus asks of any of us: that we come and see for ourselves who he is. Even if you have questions or doubts, just come and check Jesus out for yourself.

Come and see if you have more peace, more joy, more love.

Come and see if you have less worry, less anger, less guilt.

Come and see if your life takes on a sense of meaning and purpose.

Come and see if you think less about yourself and more about others.

Come and see if life is better with Jesus or without him.

Come and see.

We do not need to hide behind masks of social niceties, or laden tables, Jesus’ challenge to us is to open our hearts to him and to others, to respond to his invitation Come and see, and then in turn to extend that invitation.

We live in a world where suspicion of others is almost epidemic. The Church by contrast is trying to create an open door, inviting the young folk in, recognizing them as valuable. Our invitation is simple; Come and see....

Come and see... you are welcome, come and see..... by issuing the invitation we create an open door, extend a welcome and provide the possibility of a new relationship, one where we may find ourselves changed by the God who meets us in unexpected people, and finds us in unexpected places.

Come and see...Jesus calls us to follow him....

Lent challenges our perfunctory faith that merely goes through the motions of church — play-acting, if you will. Lent isn't just a minor tune-up or slight readjustment of life. It doesn't just tinker around the edges or offer a cosmetic makeover. Rather, Lent calls us to resurrection from the dead through repentance.

CONCLUSION

I want to conclude my sermon quoting two of my favorite people. T.S. Elliot writes, “We had the experience but missed the meaning.” We all have the experience of encountering Jesus. That’s why we are here on Sunday morning. But have we missed the meaning of Jesus’ ministry in our lives? Frederick Nietzsche says “The ugly truth is that we come from nothing and we return to nothing after death.” He also stresses that between nothingness, we are nothing. Really? I don’t think so. It is our choice to live a meaningful life. One way to live a meaningful life as a follower of Jesus Christ is to “go out and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). That was the Jesus’ ministry and it is our ministry to carry on. It’s our turn to extend the invitation to people who are skeptic to Jesus, who are wounded, and so on.