

March 1, 2020

“Walking With Peter: Come and See”

John 1:35-42

Introduction to LENT/Sermon Series

For these next 40 days – not counting Sundays – we will be Walking with Peter. Typically, the Church has its focus on the life of Jesus in one way or another; following Him where He goes, listening to what He says, watching Him heal and restore. Lent typically finds us in the Gospels, but there are numerous Old Testament texts that help us understand Jesus and His journey to the Cross. For this Lent, we are going to deeply enter the life of one person: through his ups and downs, in moments of clarity and confusion, at times of victory and defeat. We’re going to look at what he said and what he did; including what he said he wouldn’t do and did AND what he said he would do and didn’t. More importantly, we will see what Jesus said to Peter and did for/with Peter.

[Prayer]

At the beginning of our passage and once already the day before, John the Baptist says to Andrew – as he’s pointing to Jesus: “Look! The lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.” (John 1:29, 35) Essentially, he’s saying, “Go and See” [Check Him out.] So Andrew and another disciple, who some think was the other John – the writer of this gospel and beloved disciple – [the two of them] chase after Jesus. They trust their former boss, John the Baptist, and *redirect the trajectory of their lives toward Jesus*. That’s always a good option.

And Jesus can tell He’s being stalked; He turns around and says to Andrew, “What are you looking for?” (John 1:38a) What a great question! What would you say to Jesus if He asked you that question, right now? Andrew addresses Jesus with reverence, “Rabbi (Teacher), [which hotel] are you staying at?” (John 1:38b) Can we shadow You? And Jesus is so gracious. He says, “Come and See.” [Check Me out.] Jesus welcomes Andrew to hang out and see for himself. “Don’t just take someone else’s word for it, come and see who I am for yourself.”

One can only imagine what those few hours were like with Jesus, but however long it was and whatever Jesus said and did during their time together, Andrew is convinced that John the Baptist was right. So he goes to get Peter. And what does he say to his brother? We’ve found Messiah. “Come with me.” [Check Jesus out.] He does what’s quite natural, but so often gets suppressed when it comes to matters of faith: he goes and tells someone he cares about what he’s excited about . . . WHO he’s excited about.

We do that all the time. “You HAVE to come with me!” we say to a friend: to a movie, concert, ball game, or favorite restaurant – or to meet another friend or family member. “You’ll love it” we say on the way to a mountain biking/hiking/cross country ski trail. “Come on” we beg a friend to join us at a craft sale or game of bridge. We bring people we care about to all sorts of places and people and events we’re excited about. But what about bringing them to Jesus? “Well, that’s different.” “Faith is so personal; so controversial.” I’m not saying we should get weird about it, or judgmental, or high pressure; but let’s at least share our excitement about and offer an invitation to those who have never met Jesus. Andrew says, “Come with me!” What a huge step with HUGE consequences!

Let me pause and ask a personal question: Who was/is your Andrew? Who brought you closer to Jesus to check Him out for yourself? Was it a parent, relative, Sunday School teacher, camp counselor, youth minister, college roommate, spouse, co-worker, friend? Maybe it was a combination of a bunch of people. Now I’m going to get even more personal: Whose Andrew are you?

If we’re going to be “Rooted in Jesus, Growing in His Love, [and] Branching Out to Serve Others” then we need to have a willingness to actually tell people about the One who we are connected to and, in whose name, we are branching out to serve them. We cannot allow people to believe that their deepest need is a warm meal or affordable housing or a moving concert on Good Friday. We can provide all those things – in the name of Jesus and for His glory – but, ultimately, people need to at least meet Jesus for themselves. Let’s be someone’s Andrew.

So John the Baptist says to Andrew, “Go and See.” [Check Him out.] Jesus says to Andrew, “Come and See.” [Check Me out.] And Andrew says to his brother, “Come with me!” [Let’s check Jesus out.]

Peter and Andrew go looking for Jesus together. What they don’t understand – and who could(?) – is that more than the two of them are looking for Jesus, Jesus has already been looking for them; or, more accurately, AT them. When they get to Jesus, the text tells us that Jesus “looked intently” at Peter. And Jesus says, “Here’s What I See.” [I’ve been checking you out.] Let me tell you who you are: your name is Simon – we all know that – but I’m going to call you **Peter**. Jesus gives him a nickname – the Rock; Rocky.

What’s in a name? More specifically, what’s in a nickname?

Sometimes it’s just playfulness that leads to a nickname. But often there’s a story or event or attribute behind the nickname – that’s why the nickname sticks. In a culture that tends to pick birth names without attaching literal meaning to the person named, our understanding and

experience of nicknames may be the closest thing we have to understanding what's going on in this story.

Nicknaming/re-naming in biblical times was SIGNIFICANT. For both God and people it was a way of declaring who people were and who they were becoming. Abram becomes Abraham (exalted father becomes father of multitudes; Sarai becomes Sarah (it's a slight change but princess/queen becomes 'my' princess or queen; Jacob becomes Israel (schemer or deceiver becomes one who wrestles with God. In biblical times, naming is all about **Identity**.

[I'll spend time talking about Jesus renaming Simon to Peter over the next few weeks.]

For the next few minutes I want to talk about IDENTITY. Being unclear about our identity has huge consequences. Part of a parent's job (and The Church's job) is to help our kids discover their true, God-given identity. My dad's death when I was 15 left me with a lot of unanswered questions about my identity: as a man, a son, and a follower of Jesus. Unfortunately, my identity became defined by some good and some not-so-good things: girlfriends, sports, my '69 Mustang, and even Christian leadership and ministry. It was hard to see myself primarily as the beloved son of a father who was no longer present, so I looked to be defined by lesser things and people; even by some good things and good people. **There is a huge price to pay when we are unclear or unsure about our identity. Oftentimes, we are the one who pays the price.**

Did anyone read the article in the paper yesterday about Domestic Violence? The Mesa County expert police investigator, featured prominently in the article, has been focused on domestic violence for 20 years. He shared a startling statistic. Women who are abused "leave seven times before they leave for good." There are a complexity of reasons why abused women keep returning to their abuser. But one factor has to be a twisted identity and the feeling that one is not worthy of love.

The Good News: is that when we come to Jesus – to see who He is and check Him out – we also get to find out who we are. Jesus sees us ("looks intently" at us) and knows our true identity. And the reason He could do this unlike anyone else ever has is BECAUSE HE KNEW WHO HE WAS AND WHOSE HE WAS. At His baptism, He heard His Father's declaration from heaven: "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." (Matthew 3:17, Mark 1:11, Luke 3:22) When we know we're a beloved son or daughter (even on a human level), so many other things fall away and fall into place. But this is seldom the case. We get so many mixed messages about who we are, and it can be pretty messy to sort and sift through all of the identities layered on top of us by various people over time (including our parents).

Jesus understood this, by the way. His own family and neighbors got His identity wrong on more than one occasion. So did Peter and the disciples. That is why He had to keep rooting His

identity in what His Father had declared, and what He knew the scriptures had declared. This is why it is so important that parents, grandparents and churches keep helping kids to be rooted in Jesus. It is the only way they will know who they are. And the same is true for us.

Who are you? Who are you NOT?

It will be very hard to ever answer either question if we aren't Walking With (in the presence of) Jesus.

So that's what will be doing over the next 40 days or so: Walking With Jesus as we Walk With Peter.

The Lenten season is a journey, but the destination isn't a place or finished product. In fact, there is a 100% guarantee that none of us will be polished/finished anytime soon. God knows Peter wasn't – even though he walked with Jesus more intimately than just about anyone else. The journey we are talking about does have a final destination . . . but it's a PERSON named JESUS. And JESUS said, "Come and See."