

Sermon 18/01/2026 John 1: 29-42

Come and see

I had gone to visit my grandchildren and was surprised when a five year old Izzy grabbed me by the hand and took me back outside. 'Come and see, Granny', she said. And there standing quietly in a stable was the cause of the excitement – a grey pony called Lucy. Since then, as Izzy has grown both in size and riding ability there have been other ponies, but that first excitement has never been replicated, 'Come and see'.

Given the length of today's gospel reading you may be surprised that I have homed in on just three words towards the end – come and see.

At this point John's gospel having started with that poetical and mystical prologue has reverted to a more straightforward narrative. It is worth remembering that in terms of this gospel we have no real understanding of what to expect of Jesus. His coming has been foretold by John, but not in a way that we can expect to recognise him. As the prologue so beautifully puts it, 'He was in the world, but the world did not know him'.

But John recognises Jesus when he comes for baptism. Because we are familiar with all the gospels we feel that there is a mismatch here. If John and Jesus were cousins, why did they not know each other through family? We don't know. But remember Jesus had spent part of his early life in Egypt, John had taken himself off to live in the desert, other family circumstances may have intervened. John recognises not Jesus the cousin, but Jesus the Messiah.

John by his actions and words is responsible for setting the scene here. He sees Jesus and tells the others that this is who he has foretold, the man who ranks ahead of him, and against who he, John, is unworthy. And he describes the scene at Jesus' baptism of the dove that came down to rest upon him. Then he makes his sacrifice. He points Jesus out to his disciples as the Son of God, and they leave him and walk off, after Jesus.

As they acknowledge that Jesus is the teacher they seek, they ask him where they should find him. He asks what they are looking for, and without them even answering confirms, 'Come and see'. They have been promised they will find without saying what they seek.

For us reading this soon after the Christmas story we are aware of other calls to find out about Jesus. The shepherds sent by the angels - you will find the baby. That is almost more of an instruction than a suggestion. The magi being drawn by the star and scripture to find the newborn king, and Herod telling them to go on to find the child. And in today's passage Andrew, who after sitting with Jesus, goes to find his brother Simon, and brings him to come and see.

At that beginning of the Christian church were people who had responded to the invitation. For many of us our presence here today may be in reply to a similar invitation.

Even for those who grew up being taken to church by parents or grandparents, at some point we have all made a deliberate and personal decision to be a churchgoer. We have all made a deliberate and personal decision that we are going to this church, and that we are doing it today. At some time we reacted to the invitation and have come and seen.

The invitations can be in many forms, a poster, a curiosity about a building, curiosity about a group of people, being invited by a friend, taken by a friend, reading a Bible while away from home.... It is a list that is varied and endless. But there are some common themes. Obviously that the invitation is to share in the joy of knowing Jesus. Also the role of others in issuing the invitation, not necessarily in as clear a statement as Jesus made to Andrew and his companion. But someone put that poster up, left the Bible you picked up, actively invited you.

It has been suggested that instead of walking past the church when we are near we should pop in, even if only briefly as people who see us do that are more likely to follow suit and less likely to just be passers by. We once accidentally left a Bible on a bus. We have no idea what happened next, but hopefully it was at least opened by whoever picked it up. Just being frank about where you will be on a Sunday morning. All these are forms of invitation, encouragement to others that there may be something here for them.

It is our task now to continue with those invitations. Jesus' invitation was clear and specific, and to replicate that could be scary. John was sacrificial in encouraging his disciples to follow Jesus instead. If that feels a bit too much, too bold a step there are so many things that we can do. Being open about our faith, inviting others to church events if a service feels like a bridge too far. Many people have a perception of church and the people in it which is far from real – not because we are all superhuman, but because we are not. Our ordinariness can be our greatest strength. Linda and I remember a 10 myear old who rushing between activities at the Easter Journey told her, I thought church was boring, but this isn't'.

Today's gospel passage describes a pivotal moment in the life of the Church, it is easy to see this as the start of a congregation, Jesus, Andrew, his brother and his friend. What we see is a picture of kindness. John, without hesitation, indicates that his disciples should change their allegiance, they should follow Jesus and not him. And Jesus so gently invites the men to 'come and see' and gives up the rest of his day to them.

Denise reminded us last week that while some people will jump excitedly into church life, others will approach more slowly. I will admit to not sharing the excitement of the arrival of Lucy the pony, although I did quite enjoy going to my first horse show the following day. For some people exploring faith will be the result of a significant something and may lead to an early and wholehearted commitment. Part of our task is

to recognise when the kinder, gentler approach is needed – when we too should stretch out a hand and say, ‘Come and see’.