



CHURCH of
the SAVIOUR

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“The Great Adventure”

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John 1:35-46

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I was 17 years old when I received my call to ministry. It came during my senior year of high school, which felt like really inconvenient timing to me back then. I had my own plans for what I wanted to do after high school. I was going to pursue a bachelor's degree in Athletic Training and then I was going to pursue a Master's in Physical Therapy. It was all very clear to me what I wanted to do. But then I started to hear God speaking to me at night, right when I was trying to fall asleep. God was impressing upon me that while my plans were good, they were not the plans God had for me. After a while I realized that God was calling me to the ministry. I could just feel it reverberating in my heart and mind. And not just any ministry, but ordained ministry. Needless to say, at 17 years old, I was not wild about this. Being a pastor was the last thing I wanted to do.

This sense of God's calling persisted. When it came to college decisions, I chose to declare an undecided major and I accepted the offer at a regional campus of Indiana University in South Bend. It did not feel wise to pay more for tuition when I really did not have a clear sense of where I was going. I graduated from high school and prepared to go to camp for the final time as a camper. I had attended Sr. High Institute for four years and was looking forward to my fifth and final year. My summers at Institute are among the most formational experiences in my Christian life. It made a huge impact on my life. Institute is the place where I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior but is also the place where I accepted my call to ministry. We celebrated these things on Commitment Night, which was every Thursday night at camp. I had been wrestling with God over my call to ministry. I was tired of wrestling over my call but I was also afraid and I did not want to change course. However, I knew that I could not run away from my calling. I knew it would persist and that I needed to be faithful to it. So finally, I went over to the chapel and prayed, accepting my call, and dedicating myself to whatever it is God wanted me to do.

Accepting the call to ministry set me off on one of the greatest adventures of my life. It has been a circuitous journey, but it has brought me to this place today. There is much, much more to my call story and exactly how I got to this point but suffice it to say that it all has been worth it. And I continually seek to know God's call on my life and to know what God is inviting me to do next. While all of this technically started at my baptism, my time at camp was the catalyst for my entire life trajectory.

The overarching theme of this sermon series is Summer Camp, but each week contains a subtheme that we will unpack. I came up with themes that you might actually find as the week-long theme at a summer camp, particularly for the younger crowd. Today we kickoff our series with “The Great Adventure.” Following Jesus is a great adventure and as we will see in today's passage, Jesus invites us to come and see. Jesus invites us to follow him and to invite others along for the journey, too.

This passage of scripture contains the call story for Jesus' first disciples, as told by John. It is quite different from the call stories found in the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). In John's narrative, the first disciples of Jesus were actually disciples of John the Baptist first. They were with John the Baptist and John saw Jesus walking by and proclaimed, “Look! The Lamb of God!” Those two disciples heard what John said and they started following Jesus. In a few verses we will find out that one of these two disciples was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. Now when we see the word “follow” here, it is being used in a literal sense. They were walking behind, trying to see where Jesus was going. Jesus noticed that they were following him and turned around and asked “What are you looking for?” They responded by asking Jesus, “Where are you staying?” Jesus said, “Come and see.” The two went and saw where Jesus was staying and they remained there with him that day.

There is a lot we can unpack in just these few verses. First, I am taken by the selflessness of John the Baptist. He had complete humility and was pointing beyond himself. He knew full well that he would lose disciples by pointing them to Jesus, but it was not about John. It was about Jesus. I think we need that reminder from time to time. It is not about us and how many people we can gather on our side, because at the end of the day it is all about Jesus and making

disciples of Jesus for the transformation of the world. As your pastor, I am not here to make disciples of me, but disciples of Jesus. Although, there would be a lot more people who love cats, iced coffee, and listening to Christmas music year-round if there were disciples of Amanda running around.

A significant aspect of these verses is Jesus stopping and speaking to the disciples who were following along behind him. This speaks to the fact that Jesus always meets us halfway. We do not have to go a great distance to have access to Jesus. Jesus meets us there. God is always the primary actor. God is the one who loves us first, offers us grace, and opens the door for us. We do not need to run ourselves ragged trying to get God's attention. God is already paying attention and waiting for us.

Jesus turned and opened the door to conversation, asking the disciples what they were looking for. This was not a surface-level question but a question that plumbed the depths of their hearts and their deepest needs. Undoubtedly, those disciples had already heard a great deal about Jesus from John the Baptist. John the Baptist himself was testifying and witnessing about Jesus. In the preceding passage we see John making bold proclamations about Jesus: That Jesus is the Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, the One who is greater and more worthy than I, the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit, the Son of God. John is affirming Jesus' identity as the one that they had been waiting for, the prophesied Messiah. So when John points Jesus out to his disciples, they were eager to learn more. Something about this man had piqued their attention and spoken to their hearts.

They wanted to know where Jesus was staying. This was not just a curious question, like the one we might ask someone when they are traveling. They wanted to linger and spend time with Jesus. They wanted to know more and experience more. So what does Jesus do? He invites them to "come and see." He invites them in. Scripture tells us they remained with him that day. The Greek for "remain" (*meno*) can be understood as to stay, live, dwell, abide; to be in a state that begins and continues, yet may or may not end or stop. While their time in that residence was short-term, it began a relationship that would last. They became disciples of Jesus.

Andrew was so taken by Jesus that he decided his brother Simon needed to know about Jesus. He could not keep Jesus to himself. He went and found his brother and led him to Jesus. When Simon arrived, Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas." Cephas translates to Peter, the name we know him by. This word "looked," *emlepein* in the original Greek, is more than a passing glance. It is an intense gaze that goes beyond the surface. Jesus saw not only who Peter was but who he would become. Jesus sees not only who we are but what we can become. Jesus sees not only the actualities of our lives but the possibilities, as well. We are deeply known by Jesus. His gaze upon us is one of understanding and invitation to more.

The next day Jesus wanted to go on to Galilee. He found Philip and invited him to "Follow me." We do not know much about this particular encounter, but Jesus made a big enough impression on Philip that he started following him right away. There is a sense of immediacy in the gospels when it comes to following Jesus. Jesus' presence was so compelling. I can only imagine what it would have been like to look into his eyes and see the endless possibility. To see the redemption and hope. To see the chance for adventure and something new. They jumped at the opportunity. Philip went to his friend Nathanael and said, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law and the Prophets: Jesus, Joseph's son, from Nazareth." Nathanael responded, "Can anything from Nazareth be good?" To which Philip replied, "Come and see."

Discipleship is at the heart of this passage. We see the first disciples of Jesus being called and beginning to follow him. We see those disciples in turn going to find their friends and loved ones to share about Jesus and invite them to come and see who this Jesus is all about. Thinking about the twelve disciples, they had no idea what they were getting themselves into when they decided to follow Jesus. They left their jobs and families to follow Jesus. What they witnessed Jesus do was amazing. The healings, the miracles, the teaching and preaching, the care and compassion he extended, the challenge he provided to the Pharisees, his very presence and very self shared with them. What an adventure! We never know what we are getting ourselves into when we decide to follow Jesus. Following Jesus opens up paths and doorways that we would never pass on our own. Following Jesus changes us to our core. Following Jesus brings us a wellspring of hope, peace, love, grace, and forgiveness.

Being a disciple has a personal, individual component. As individuals we choose to follow Jesus or not. Our own lives are changed by following Jesus. We nurture and cultivate that relationship through prayer, reading scripture, and worship, among many other spiritual practices. But there is also an external component, and I am not referring to the acts of mercy and justice that are an outpouring of our faith in God. Those are critically important. But what I am referring to is the invitation we extend to others.

Invite just happens to be our fifth practice of discipleship here at Church of the Saviour. How did Jesus put it? Come and see. We can reflect that in our lives, too. Come and see what has made a difference in my life. Come and see my source of hope and joy. Come with me to this event at church. Come with me to my small group. Come with me and help at a service project. Come with me to Phoenix Coffee or Stone Oven or Boss Dog in honor of COTS Loves Cedar Lee. Come and see. Our very lives need to be invitational. It is not always in the words we say but in the way we live our lives. Do our lives point to Jesus? Are our lives visibly and tangibly transformed because we are following Jesus? Not everyone will be receptive and that is okay. In our scripture passage, Nathanael was incredibly doubtful about this Jesus person. Philip graciously and humbly extended the invitation to come and see. The outcome is not up to us. What matters is whether or not you are living a life that is faithful to God and being ever transformed into the likeness of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Come and see. Jesus was inviting those first disciples into something special, something new. Jesus invites us to come and see. It takes faith to step out into the unknown, to not know where we will end up. I certainly did not know where I would end up when I accepted my call to ministry. But I took the risk. I went and saw, and I never looked back. I imagine we all have a story about following Jesus and how that has changed our lives. We can all recount the adventures we have been on, the journeys we have walked, the doors that have opened, all because we decided to follow Jesus. It is certainly not always easy, in fact, following Jesus can be one of the most challenging things we do. And yet, I think it is a journey we would all take again and again. Following Jesus is the adventure of a lifetime, the great adventure that lasts a lifetime. Come and see. Amen.