

Come and See  
John 1:43-51

Last week we talked about the joy of a fresh start. With the new year, a new administration, and new staff members here at Chapelwood, we are getting a fresh start. And it feels good, really good.

But, of course, there are some people who dread fresh starts. A fresh start always involves traveling unfamiliar roads. I've discovered that there are people who prefer traveling a familiar road, even if they don't like where it's taking them. They are like the Hebrews in the desert who came to Moses and said, "It was a mistake leaving Egypt. Sure, we were slaves, and they treated us miserably. But at least we knew what to expect. Let's leave this strange place and go back to Egypt." In other words, some people will say, "Things may not have been perfect. But at least we knew what was what."

Some people would rather be miserable than to not know what's going on.

One time I was an assistant spiritual director for a women's Emmaus Walk. Now, for the sake of those who haven't been on an Emmaus Walk, I will simply say that although the Emmaus Walk is very well planned, the pilgrims are not given a schedule of what will happen and when it will happen. Almost all the pilgrims I have observed enjoy not having to watch a clock and just relaxing and letting things happen. It's part of the magic of an Emmaus Walk. However, there was this one woman who had a serious trust issue. She wanted to know everything that was going to happen and when it was happening and why it was happening. By the time the weekend was over she was so frantic that she was ready to grab somebody by the lapels and scream, "Schedule! I need a schedule! Right here! Right now!" Everyone else had a mountaintop experience that weekend. But for this woman it was the weekend from hell, because she could not deal with not being in control.

Many of Jesus' disciples had an issue with trust. Certainly the very first one did. We don't know his name. He and Andrew were talking with John when Jesus walked by. John told them that Jesus was the Lamb of God. They went after Jesus to talk with him. When Jesus realized they were hurrying to catch up with him, he asked them what they wanted. The unnamed disciple asked where Jesus was staying. Why would he ask that? Because he planned on spending time with Jesus when it fit his schedule. But Jesus was not having any of that. He just said, "Come and see."

You can just see that disciple wanting to say, "Wait a minute. I'm not going anywhere until you tell me where we're going. I asked for an address, and I want an address. What if you are staying in a part of town I don't want to be in? How long will it take to get there? I've got plans for this evening. I can't be late. What if we get separated in traffic, how will I ever find you if I don't have an address? At least give me your cell phone number, so that I can call you if I get lost."

But all Jesus says is, "Come and see." In another words, "If you want to spend time with me, you will have to trust me enough to follow me, even though you don't know where we're going."

And that may be the reason we don't know the name of that first disciple. It could well be that his trust issues were such a problem for him that he couldn't even trust the Son of God.

Christ doesn't give out schedules to his disciples. Christ says, "Follow me." If your response is, "Where are we going?" he will probably say, "Come and see."

Why is that? Why doesn't Jesus just come out and tell us where he is leading us?

Well, for one thing he wants us to trust him. We are saved by faith. And faith is just another word for trust. We are saved by our ability to trust God's goodness, power and love.

Fear is what destroys our souls. People who are determined to maintain absolute control may look confident and strong, but many are actually fearful people. The reason they have to maintain control is because they are afraid the world will collapse if they aren't constantly working to keep everything in place. They fear the unknown and the unexpected.

Jesus came to invite us to let God be God, to let go of our fears and trust God to keep everything in place in the universe and in our lives. As the old timers used to say, "Let go, and let God." That is the way to life. It's the way to joy and peace.

One time I was called to do a funeral for a man. He was a member of the church, but I just begun my ministry in that church. I had talked with him a couple of times, but couldn't really say I knew him. So, I visited with his family to prepare for the service. His daughter was the one who really wanted to tell me about him. She said, "Now Dad was an engineer, and he had to have everything planned out. When we would go on a vacation, Dad would draw a diagram of the trunk of the car and where each suitcase was to go. He had a schedule for the trip and planned stops. This schedule had to be followed strictly. There were times when my eyes were watering and I was praying that I would make it to the next scheduled stop. But I would never have asked Dad to make an unscheduled stop. He was really uncomfortable with anything he hadn't planned for. He had a strong need to keep control of the events in our life."

Then on one vacation the unexpected happened. Their car broke down. It was a serious breakdown. The auto shop said it would take several days to get the parts and do the repairs. One of the mechanics told them about a state park nearby with a hotel. Her father called. The hotel manager said that they almost never had a vacancy at this time of the year, but it just so happened they did. The mechanic took them out there. It was a wonderful, rustic hotel on a beautiful lake in a pine forest. She said that at first her father was nearly beside himself. All of his plans were destroyed and now they were in a place he had never planned to be, and there was nothing he could do about it. But after a day or two, he gave up and just enjoyed the beauty of the setting. She said it was the best vacation they ever had, and the only time in her life that she saw her father actually relax and enjoy himself. He had to lose control before he could really enjoy himself.

Once you have experienced the peace which comes from trusting Jesus, you watch people struggling desperately and vainly to stay in control, and you just want to say to them, "Friends, relax. It's going to be all right. Just have faith."

The first disciple probably failed as a disciple, because he wasn't able to give up control of his life.

In contrast, there is Philip. The day after Jesus' encounter with Andrew and the unnamed disciple, he saw Philip and called him to follow him. Without a second

thought, Philip followed Jesus and spent several hours with him. When he realized who Jesus was, he did what he spent the rest of his life doing. He went looking for someone to invite to follow Jesus. He found a friend named Nathanael. He told him that he had found the Messiah. He was Jesus of Nazareth. Nathanael's response was, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Philip could have argued with him and tried to convince him. But he didn't. He just said, "Come and see." He was asking Nathanael to trust him.

I remember when I was still living at home, one night about 3 o'clock in the morning, my brothers suddenly burst into my room and said, "Wesley, wake up. You've got to see this." I said, "What?" They said, "Just come on and see. You wouldn't believe us if we tried to tell you." Well, I started to tell them to get lost and let me go back to sleep, but I followed them out into the front yard. And I saw a sight I will never forget. We were having a meteor shower. The sky was full of falling stars from one horizon to the next, as thick as raindrops. They seemed so close that I felt like I could reach up and touch them. If my brothers had tried to tell me what they wanted me to see, I wouldn't have believed them. All they could say was, "Come and see," and because I was willing to follow them, even though I had no idea what they were taking me to see, I saw one of the most amazing sights I will ever see in my life.

And because Nathanael trusted Philip enough to come and see, he met the most amazing person he would ever meet. He met a man who knew him inside and out. He knew everything about him, even where he was standing when Philip found him. And this man told him that was nothing compared to the things he would show him. He would see the heavens opened up and the angels of God ascending and descending up on the Son of Man.

Can anything good come from Nazareth? Nathanael had enough faith to go and see. And the answer is, Yes!

We begin this fresh start in the midst of a major recession. People who, just a few months ago, thought they had the script written for the rest of their lives now find that they don't know where they will be living and working at the end of this year.

We are being reminded that we aren't in control. We never have been. Life is full of surprises. We should be surprised when our plans work out the way we draw them up, not when they don't.

That doesn't mean we shouldn't make our plans. We should. We just shouldn't be surprised when things don't work out as we plan.

For a long time I resisted the concept of time management. As a pastor my day is always full of the unexpected. I did not think a pastor's day could be planned. But at a time management seminar the teacher explained to me that a good time manager does not expect for his day to go as planned. You should allow for interruptions. But go ahead and plan. You will accomplish a portion of the tasks you wanted to accomplish that day, and the next day you can reschedule the things you didn't get to.

As James says, "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town and spend a year there, doing business and making money.' Yet you do not even know what tomorrow will bring...Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wishes, we will live and do this or that.'" (James 4:13-15)

Make your plans. But leave room for the unexpected. God's hand is often revealed in the unexpected.

Can anything good come from a great recession?  
Jesus says, "Come and see." If we trust Jesus enough to walk with him, we will see the heavens opened up and the angels of God ascending and descending on us.  
Come and see.

Dr. Wesley Welborn  
Senior Pastor

1. Where does a fresh start lead?
2. "Come and see."
3. Some people are afraid of not knowing.
4. We are saved by faith in Christ, not by knowledge and control.
5. Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Come and see.