

Sermon: *Come and See*
Text: *John 1:35-51*
Date: *January 18, 2009*
Place: *Jesup First UMC*

Sermon: *Something Good Can Come from Nazareth*
Text: *John 1:35-51*
Date: *January 15, 2006*
Place: *Wrightsville First UMC and Cedar Grove UMC*

One of the best things about going on vacation is being able to get out of town for a while and get away from the house and your job and do something a little different. Well, there we were, walking through the Georgia Aquarium and I have to admit I was acting a little crazy – making funny noises and waving my arms a little. Then, suddenly, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a familiar face. And I thought to myself, “*Oh God, please don’t let this be who I think it is!*” And I looked again and the woman walking beside me was Charlene Black, our Conference Lay Leader. And I thought, “*Well, maybe she won’t recognize me.*” But just about that time, she said: “*Sure is funny running into you today. Are you enjoying yourself?*”

Sometimes, you can run into people in the most unusual places. And it’s always unexpected.

Well, in our text this morning, Philip has an encounter with Jesus and immediately, he went and found his friend, Nathaniel, and said: “*We have found the man about whom Moses and the prophets wrote, Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth.*” And because Nathaniel never expected to encounter a Messiah from Nazareth, he asked Philip: “*Can anything good come from Nazareth?*” And Philip said: “*Come and see.*”

It’s really easy to find ourselves in the same situation. It’s easy for us to have certain preconceived ideas about the church, about how things are, and about what the possibilities are. And sometimes, we sit back and say: “*Can anything good*

come from Jesup First UMC? Can anything good come from our children's program or youth program? Can anything good come from that contemporary music?" And the truth is: you and I may never know unless we see it and experience it for ourselves. Like Nathaniel and Philip and the many other disciples who followed Jesus, we are given a special invitation: "Come and see! Come and see the difference God can make. Come and see what God can do, if a person will only set aside their preconceived ideas and strive to know the Lord in all His fullness."

But what is it that the Lord would have us see? What is it that moves Philip and Nathaniel and all the others to follow Jesus? Come and see what?

1. COME AND SEE SOULS REDEEMED!

John the Baptist was baptizing in the River Jordan when Jesus walked by and John said: "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.*" Now, standing with John that day was a group of men who had become his disciples. And immediately, they began to follow Jesus and Jesus turned around and asked them: "*What do you want?*" And they said: "*Rabbi, where are you staying?*" And He said: "*Come and see.*"

Now, one of those disciples was Andrew and he immediately found his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus. A life redeemed! And the two became four and the four became 8 and the 8 became 12. And the 12 became 70 and the 70 became 120! And by the end of the first century, there were over half a million

Christians. And today, the church is growing so fast in places like South America and Africa that there aren't enough pastors to go around.

That's what Philip saw! That's what Nathaniel saw! They saw lives redeemed! "*Come and see!*"

(Example of a life redeemed – i.e. Jonathan McDonald at Wrightsville First)

So, come and see a life redeemed! Come and see the evidence of God's work among us. Come and see Jesus in our Sunday School program, in our small groups, in our contemporary worship service, in our evening worship service, in our music ministries. Friends, the Living Christ is here and He is working among us and redeeming lives. Come and see!

2. COME AND SEE LIVES TRANSFORMED!

When Philip met Jesus, it was a transforming experience. And when he told Nathaniel about Jesus, Nathaniel was a bit skeptical and so they went to see Jesus together. And when Jesus met Nathaniel, He said: "*Here comes an honest man, a true son of Israel.*" And Nathaniel said: "*How do you know me?*" Jesus said: "*I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you.*" And suddenly, Nathaniel experienced a transformation. He went from skeptic to believer! He came to realize that there was something special about Jesus and he said: "*Rabbi, you are the Son of God, the King of Israel.*"

In the heat of a skirmish at the end of World War II, a German soldier dove into a fox hole and found himself face to face with the enemy, a US soldier who

was dying. And they sat staring at one another for a few moments before one offered the other a drink from his canteen. And soon, these bitter enemies were chatting. And although it was hard to understand, the soldier soon realized that the dying man wanted to talk to his wife and kids one last time. He pointed to his shirt pocket and the soldier removed the picture for the man to have one last look. When the German soldier saw the look on the man's face he realized something new: this dying man wasn't the enemy; he was a father and husband, a man who loves and is loved by others. And he took the dying man in his arms and held him until the end. And that's the day that the world changed. From that day on, when he looked out over the battlefield, that German soldier no longer saw the enemy; he saw men just like himself. What a transformation!

That's the invitation Jesus gives us this morning. Come and see lives transformed!

3. COME AND SEE THE MIRACLES OF THE KINGDOM!

Jesus asked Nathaniel: *"Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see even greater things than these! You will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."*

Can you imagine what these 12 men witnessed with their own eyes? They saw miracles. They saw the blind made to see; they saw the lame walk; they saw the hungry fed with 5 loaves and 2 fish. They

saw Him walk on water. They saw the dead brought back to life. They saw Him crucified and raised again.

Come and see the miracles of the Kingdom in and through the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth!

You know, the church can become so routine for you and me. And sometimes we fail to recognize the miraculous. We pray for healing, but fail to give thanks when healing comes. We pray for financial blessings, but fail to tithe when the blessings come.

Yet, Jesus said: “Greater things will you do than I have done.” Do you know there was a time in my life when I didn’t believe that? I didn’t believe Jesus did miracles today. Then, I was standing at an altar in Ciudad Victoria, Mexico when a young mama brought her son to the altar. The son’s leg was swollen and black and blue. It was obviously broken. She wanted help. She wanted healing. And we gathered around that little boy, anointed him with oil, laid hands on him and prayed for his healing. And I watched that little boy walk out of that sanctuary that night without even limping.

And Jesus can do similar things among us. His invitation is: “Come and see” the miracles of the Kingdom. Come and see lives redeemed; come and see lives transformed; come and see the miracles of the Kingdom!

But there’s another truth that I want us to see and that is the importance of issuing the invitation to others. Jesus invited the two disciples of John. Andrew invited Simon; Philip invited Nathaniel. And

they invited others, who invited others, who invited others. Who are you inviting?

Valencius came to the United States to study law. He was far away from home, in a new country and a new culture. But he soon made friends with a guy who lived across the hall. This friend asked him where he went to church and Valencius said he was Catholic and the friend told him about the Catholic church across town and even drew him a map to the church.

Well, the next Sunday, when Valencius got up to go to church, it was raining and he decided not to go. But about that time, there was a knock on the door and when he opened it, there stood his friend with two umbrellas, ready to take Valencius to church. And as they walked along, Valencius asked his friend where he went to Church. And the guy said; "*Oh, my Church is just around the corner.*" So wanting to get out of the rain, Valencius suggested they go to his church this week and the Catholic church the next. And so, they went to the Methodist Church around the corner and Valencius felt so much love that he never made it to the Catholic church across town.

And after graduation, instead of studying law, Valencius went to Drew Theological Seminary where he studied for the ministry. And after graduation, he went home to the Philippines and was ordained by the Methodist Church of the Philippines. And that's how a poor boy, raised in a good Catholic home, became Bishop of the Methodist Church of the Philippines.

But the hero of the story isn't Bishop Valencius. This is not a story about the power of one man to rise from poverty to greatness; it's the story of the power of an invitation. And the hero is a Methodist man with two umbrellas who cared enough to say: "*come and see.*"

Who are you inviting? Come and see lives redeemed; come and see lives transformed; come and see the miracles of God's Kingdom. Come and see, something good really can come from Jesup First United Methodist Church!

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT! AMEN!