

Discipleship week 2, 18/06/17: Come and see

Matt 9:9-13

Luke 24:13-32

John 1:35-49

Series on Discipleship. Huge amount of work has been put into this by Phil, for which the staff team are all very grateful.

Last week we looked at what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, and we heard that in Jesus' day the aim of a disciple wasn't just to acquire knowledge from their Rabbi, but to become like him. They didn't just listen to their wisdom, and study books – they watched their lives, and tried to do the things they did. That's why when Peter saw Jesus walking on the water he said, "Call me to come to you on the water!" and he stepped out of the boat.

He was trying to be like Jesus, to do what he was doing.

And that is theme – and the challenge - that will run all through this sermon series. We are not going to learn ABOUT Jesus. We are going to get to know him, SO THAT we can be like him. Live as he would. Say what he would say.

And this week we are going back to the beginning of the journey, back to the early days when most of those who would become Jesus closest disciples didn't really know who he was. But there was something about him, something compelling, something that drew people to him, something that made them curious.

I wonder when you were last curious about something. When you saw something that made you think, 'I'd like to investigate that a bit'. I have a nephew who recently started a job as an engineer with Thames Water, and my mother commented that when he was small she can remember that he was always fascinated by drains! He was always trying to work out where the water went. He was curious. Often an adventure begins with our curiosity.

Andrew and his friend in John chapter 1 have been told by John the Baptist that Jesus is the Lamb of God". What on earth does that mean? Who is this man? How could they find out? So they follow him, and when Jesus senses their interest and asks them what they are looking for he invites them to 'Come and see' where he is staying. And they end up spending the day with him, and by the end of the day Andrew is pretty convinced that they had been talking to the Messiah. And this meeting changed the course of his life.

I wonder if you can remember when you first became interested in Jesus?

Perhaps in Sunday School? Perhaps at school? Perhaps through a friend of relative.

For me it was when I was at university. I had inadvertently made friends with some Christians, and I had become curious about their faith. I could see they had something I didn't have – an inner peace, an inner joy, a sense of purpose and direction, something I knew I didn't have. I didn't want to let on that I was too interested, and they weren't pushy. But half way through my second year my best friend Becky left a note on my door which said, "There's a really good speaker coming to the CU tonight, and I'd really love you to come and hear him."

I didn't know what a CU was at this point, but I'd guessed it was something to do with Christianity, and I was keen to find out more, so I went. In fact, I can remember running to her room because I was afraid I'd be late and miss the chance to discover whatever it was that she'd got and that I was still searching for.

That night I heard for the first time that Jesus had died on a cross for my sins, so that I could be forgiven. I did believe in God, but no-one had ever told me about Jesus, or him dying for me, and that night I realised for the first time that being a Christian meant far more than just believing in God. It meant making a commitment, a decision to follow Jesus that involved turning away from the things in my life that I knew were wrong, and there were quite a lot of those!

Did I become a Christian that night? No. Was my curiosity stirred further? Yes.

And I kept asking questions, reading books, even occasionally going to church, and eventually a year or so later I gave my life to Jesus, asked him to be my Lord, and the adventure really took off.

But it began with curiosity, and a friend's invitation to me to 'Come and see'.

In our gospel reading from John, the first thing Andrew does after spending time with Jesus is to go and find his brother, Simon, and says to him, "We have found the Messiah!" and v42 says 'He brought Simon to Jesus.' Philip, having been called by Jesus to follow him, goes and finds Nathaniel and say to him, "We've found the one Moses wrote about", and in response to Nathaniel's incredulity he says, "Come and see."

Matthew, a hated tax collector, as soon as he has become a follower of Jesus, invites all his friends to a party, so they can meet Jesus for themselves.

Come and see. Come and meet the one who has changed my life. The one who makes my heart burn inside when he talks to me. I don't have all the answers, I don't even have half the answers, but I know someone who does. And life is so much better since I met him.

Is that your story I wonder? Has Jesus been good news for you?

Stephen Cottrell reflects that the reason so many Christians are reluctant to share their faith is that they have never really experienced Jesus as good news themselves. He says this:

“If we have experienced something as good or joyful, there is nothing more natural than to share it with others. If we go to a good film, read a good book, if our football team wins, or if a new child is born into our family, we tell people about it. We don't feel we are oppressing them in any way by telling them about it. We don't necessarily expect, and we certainly don't demand, that they see the film, or read the book, support the team or adopt the baby. We are not looking for reward. We simply share our excitement with them.”

That's what Andrew does when he goes to tell Simon. It's also what Cleopas and his friend do after meeting Jesus on the road to Emmaus, rushing back to Jerusalem in the dark because they can't wait to tell their friends that Jesus is alive!

When Simon and I got engaged on a beach in Cornwall, the next day we drove all the way to Cambridge because I wanted to tell two of my closest friends in person. I wanted them to share my joy.

Stephen Cottrell says we need to ask ourselves:

“Do we experience the Christian faith and our membership of this church as good news for our own lives?”

If not, then let's be honest about that. It may be that it's US that needs to hear Jesus invitation afresh to “Come and see.” Come and spend some time discovering who I really am. How do we do that?

Well, maybe by reading one of the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke or John and asking Jesus to reveal himself to us more tangibly. Maybe by coming to the next Alpha, and asking all those questions you have but don't seem to get a chance to ask in church. Maybe by coming to the Nooma nights at the vicarage this term, and wrestling with what it means to be a disciple of Jesus today. Or Maybe by having a chat with the minister! There is nothing I enjoy more than

an honest discussion with someone who wants to know Jesus better than they do at the moment.

And if we do experience Jesus as Good News in our own lives – let it show. Let it overflow. Let's be the ones who say to our friends or relatives, "Come and see!" "Come to Alpha." "Come to a Nooma Night - you get cake and we have fun!" "Come to a party this Saturday at St John's, there's a BBQ and cake, and some singing." We may discover that they are already far more curious and open than we had imagined they might be.

Andrew brought his brother to Jesus. Philip brought Nathaniel, even though he was sceptical. Matthew invited all his friends to meet Jesus, even though they were all 'sinners'.

Who will you bring to Jesus?