

Trinity 1, 18/06/2017 9.30 St Peter's

This morning we have not one, not two, but THREE gospel readings. This is because today is the second in our sermon series on discipleship.

If you remember, last week we were encouraged to 'step out of the boat'. This week, we are encouraged to 'Come and See' – a phrase that will be very familiar to anyone who has ever been on an Alpha course.

I encourage you to go home and have a good look at all three of today's readings – spend time thinking about them.

The first reading, co-incidentally, is Matthew's version of the first passage, from Luke, that we looked at in our first 'Meal with Jesus' evening. We found there was plenty to think about in just that short passage: about Jesus' inclusive approach, about how his message is for the most unlikely people, and how he is not afraid to cross boundaries – an example that might encourage us into unexpected places: maybe if Jesus is willing to go there, so should we, especially if we want to find Him.

Then we have the second reading, the story of the road to Emmaus, about which again a huge amount could be said – it's a story that deserves repeated attention. Perhaps you could try reading that one every day this week, in a kind of 'Dwelling in the Word' mode – read it slowly, and see what jumps out at you each day and what that might be saying to you. (Memo to self: that might be a good exercise for me, too, on my pre-ordination retreat this week.)

But it's the third reading I want to concentrate on here, because this is the one that really brings out this week's theme 'Come and see'. What does it mean to 'Come and see'? What happened when the disciples met Jesus and spent time with him? And is it possible for us to do the same, and how?

The reading tells a very simple story – or rather a string of very simple stories – and a surprising amount happens in surprisingly few words. John the Baptist points Jesus out to two of his disciples, and they respond directly, go to meet Jesus, spend time with him, and decide on the basis of that time spent with him just how important this is.

One of the two, Andrew, then goes and fetches his brother, Simon Peter; and Peter is hooked. Then Philip is directly called by Jesus; and Philip draws in Nathanael. Five disciples made, five lives changed, human history changed, in just a few verses.

This is all very well, but how does this relate to us? We can't meet Jesus how the disciples did. How can we 'Come and see'?

I would take a number of key pointers from this passage.

First, in the passage, people come to meet Jesus in different ways. Some hear about Jesus from other people, and they hear different messages about who he is and what he means; others are directly approached by Jesus, and even the way Jesus approaches them is different, individually-tailored.

All that goes for here and now too. There's no 'one size fits all', and we shouldn't expect there to be – but the focus, the

force drawing people, is always Jesus; the call, even when other people are intermediaries, is always from Jesus.

Second, people's responses, the way people 'Come and see', vary. Peter apparently doesn't take time to weigh things up: he's straight in there, as soon as Andrew has told him this is the Messiah and Jesus has spoken to him. But Peter then goes on to be practically inseparable from Jesus for the rest of Jesus' ministry, and he learns continuously and directly from Jesus. The first two disciples in the story, on the other hand, 'spent the rest of the day' with Jesus before committing: they were looking for something, were told they might find it in Jesus, and then after investigating came to the conclusion that this was the case. No doubt they continued to learn from continued association with Jesus, as did Peter, but no doubt rather differently from Peter. Again, there is no 'one size fits all': people are different, they respond at different speeds, they commit at different stages. Again, the key mover is Jesus himself, how he draws different people to himself and then lives and walks with them.

We might want to ask, how we can find Jesus, so that we *can* respond, whether immediately and intuitively, or more cautiously. There have always been many answers to this. We can meet Jesus in the gospels, where we learn about his life and teachings. We can meet Jesus in the rest of the New Testament, and the rest of Scripture, as the story of the road to Emmaus makes clear. We can meet Jesus in the bread and wine and other sacraments. We can meet Jesus when we gather together, and in each other, as fellow Christians. We can meet Jesus in all our human brothers and sisters – and particularly in responding where there is suffering and need. We can meet Jesus in God's creation much more widely. We

can meet Jesus in our own selves. We can meet Jesus in prayer. There are many, many ways of meeting Jesus.

Maybe this feels like too many – like overload. But once again, it's not 'one size fits all', or in this case 'all sizes must be tried on'. It's not a case of having to make the effort to try out all these different ways of meeting Jesus, along with all the things church leaders like to tell you you should do to improve your spiritual lives and develop your faith. It would be an easy thing to do at this point to tell you you should all be responding better to what the parish offers – attending services better, getting more involved with this or that initiative. What we can say is that many people have found many of these things helpful, and found Jesus there.

But the point is, at heart, very simple: the call comes from Jesus, and how it sounds, and where it takes us, depends on Jesus. We can't predict it, or control it; what's up to us is whether we respond or not. If we find Jesus in any or all of these places, it's because he has first called us to those places. He may call us to quite different, unexpected places, not on the standard spiritual itinerary. What is key is that we don't ignore Jesus' invitation, whatever it means in our lives, and that we are prepared to follow where he leads.

So, to answer the question I asked earlier: can we, or how can we 'Come and see', meet Jesus and spend time with him and respond to his call, as in today's reading? My answer has to be: we certainly can, but what that means depends first and foremost on Jesus, and then on who we are and whether we are willing to respond.

Let us pray in the coming weeks that Jesus will strengthen in us our awareness of what his call is on our lives. Amen.