

**“Come and See”**  
**Isaiah 49:1-7 and John 1:29-42**  
**Pastor Daniel Graham**  
**January 16, 2011, North Presbyterian Church**

**Scripture Readings**

**Isaiah 49:1-7**

Listen to me, O coastlands,  
pay attention, you peoples from far away!  
The Lord called me before I was born,  
while I was in my mother’s womb he named me.  
He made my mouth like a sharp sword,  
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;  
he made me a polished arrow,  
in his quiver he hid me away.  
And he said to me, ‘You are my servant,  
Israel, in whom I will be glorified.’  
But I said, ‘I have laboured in vain,  
I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;  
yet surely my cause is with the Lord,  
and my reward with my God.’

And now the Lord says,  
who formed me in the womb to be his servant,  
to bring Jacob back to him,  
and that Israel might be gathered to him,  
for I am honoured in the sight of the Lord,  
and my God has become my strength—  
he says,  
‘It is too light a thing that you should be my servant  
to raise up the tribes of Jacob  
and to restore the survivors of Israel;  
I will give you as a light to the nations,  
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.’

Thus says the Lord,  
the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One,  
to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations,  
the slave of rulers,  
‘Kings shall see and stand up,  
princes, and they shall prostrate themselves,  
because of the Lord, who is faithful,  
the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.’

## **John 1:29-42**

The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him and declared, 'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, "After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me." I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.' And John testified, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.'

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?' They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter).

## **“Come and See”**

**I had a plan, or thought I did, but circumstances changed my mind.** Some time ago I agreed to preach today, and when I looked at the recommended readings I conceived an idea of what I'd talk about. Then, a bit later, I realized it was the Sunday before Martin Luther King Day. That should surely be mentioned, so my plans changed. And then, even later, we all experienced the horror of the mass killings in Tucson, Arizona. So my plans have changed again. But the Gospel lesson remains:

**Our Gospel lesson is a drama in two quick scenes. Scene One describes the ministry of John the Baptizer.** All four gospel accounts say that John was a *powerful preacher, who really knew how to reach people*. I once read a description of his preaching tour as *“the greatest evangelistic road show of all time.”* People came from miles around to hear him. It was a great experience, great entertainment for the crowds; and for many people it was truly life-changing.

**He spoke of repentance, and baptism.** As you know, *repent* means stop doing what you are doing and live your life in a totally different direction. The Greek word (*metanoia*) means to make a 180 degree turn. **That was and is now the beginning of the good news:** the way you and I live, the way we are traveling leads to destruction. It is important that we stop, turn around, and get started in a new direction, travel with a new orientation. **Then, be baptized** with water, to symbolize being washed clean from sin and being made pure for this new life with God. That was the ministry of John the Baptizer.

**Please note that the message of repentance is not just for other people in other times.** Before the crime scene investigators had even finished their work at the Safeway Market in Tucson, some

people who should know better were already pointing fingers at others, hinting that things those folks had said and done might have played a part in the tragedy. The message of John the Baptist was that the problem is not out there or over there, but in here, within each and all of us. We all share the guilt, if only because we still tolerate a mindset in which a troubled, apparently mentally disturbed young man is not provided the kind of mental health care he truly needs, **and** we have laws that allow him and others in his situation to walk into a gun store and purchase a deadly weapon designed for combat and all the ammunition he can afford.

John the Baptist talked about repentance, and forgiveness, and he practiced Baptism as a symbol of cleansing and a new beginning for each and all of us. He also told his hearers that baptism is the beginning of something, not the end. From the moment of their conversion their lives should be different from the way they had been living. Once God made them right they should work to make things right with other people. That part of the story is stressed more in the earlier verses in John 1:19-28, and in the other three Gospels. It lets us put into context the message of modern-day prophets such as Martin Luther King.

**John the Baptizer's message includes his emphasis that he was not the Messiah** that everyone was awaiting, and especially in the fourth Gospel account he specifically pointed to Jesus as the one that was awaited: ***"I myself have seen [or recognized] and testify that this is the Son of God."*** Not me, that person. Likewise, Dr. King's message reflected his Bible-informed background. He frequently spoke of issues raised by the prophets of the Hebrew Bible in tones much like John the Baptist had done. Our nation still is guilty of sin, he said; and we need to repent, and to be made new, to change for the better. Dr. King pointed the way, just as John the Baptist did. He wasn't there to call attention to Martin, but to the God of the Bible. Like the Baptist, Dr. King tried to avoid being the center of attention and keep the biblical principals at the center. He advocated racial equality, and non-violence in achieving that end even in the face of powerful resistance. King wanted everyday life in the USA to be more in line with principals taught by the Bible and by our Lord himself, and he died in the effort to bring that about. That was Scene One of the drama today.

**Scene Two begins the next day.** John is with two of his disciples. ***"Look, here is the Son of God."*** [As was suggested by that drawing on the screen earlier,] John pointed at Jesus, and at least these two of his followers took him seriously. They approached Jesus and a conversation and a spiritual adventure began.

These disciples of John approach Jesus, who asks them a question: ***"What are you looking for?"*** These were men who obviously were on some sort of spiritual quest. Why else would they have been following John, and hanging on his every word? Why else would they approach Jesus? Perhaps they were looking for something still more than John's ministry offered. So Jesus asks them what they are seeking. And they ask a question of their own: ***"Where are you staying?"*** They want to know more about Jesus, perhaps even get to know him. It appears they want to know what his life is like, to envision what their lives could be like if they followed him. ***"Where are you staying?"***

Then Jesus issues an invitation others would hear throughout his ministry, and through the centuries since: ***"Come and See."*** Come and find out for yourselves. Stay with me. Eat with me – break bread with me. Talk with me. Listen to me. They stayed. They broke bread with Jesus, at supper. They talked with. They heard what he had to say, and they observed how his life spoke the same message his words did. They stayed, and they were convinced.

One of those former followers of John, whose name was Andrew, looked for his own brother, Simon, to whom he said, ***“We have found the Messiah – the one Anointed by God whom we’ve been awaiting.”*** He didn’t explain what made him think so, but apparently he had found what he was looking for when he got to know Jesus. And, like Jesus, he seemed to be inviting Simon to ***“Come and See.”*** So Andrew becomes, in a way, the first Christian evangelist. He never pretended to know everything, or to promise Simon the world. He simply said that he and his friend thought that perhaps, just maybe, they had found the one promised by God, and he invited Simon also to ***“Come and See.”*** And as Simon responds to that invitation, Jesus gives him a new name. “You are Simon, but you will be called Peter – Rock.” Getting close to Jesus changes you. For some it even gains you a new name.

The people of God are called still and expected to be a community of people who experience his presence in hearing the Bible, in celebrating the sacraments. People who learn his love by receiving it. People who talk about that love, and who seek to live it. And I believe that you and I are invited not just to talk about the Lord, to discuss the meaning of his words and his life, but to get to know him, to experience life in the presence of others who are getting to know him, to discover what life is like shaped like in light of what Jesus Christ said and did. And part of the joy of that life is the opportunity to go to others who are important to us and to say in the most loving thing possible, ***I have found what I am looking for, and I invite you to do what I did: “Come and See.”*** Come and be part of a community of people who seek to hear a word beyond our own, to discover a new set of values, to live a new way of life. And together, may we become a community making a real difference in the world, for God’s sake. You and I are invited to participate in the new life, the new community of life, and to invite others to join us there. So may it be with us. ***“Come and See.”*** Amen.