

Sunday, February 7, 2021
5th Sunday after Epiphany

Come and See: A Patient God

Come and See: that's been our theme for Epiphany, and we've seen how God called people to come and see. He called the shepherds to come and see; Simeon and Anna, the Wisemen; they were coming to see Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus. When we look at this group of people, we see some real biblical greats. And perhaps you're like me and you've said to yourself at times, 'gosh they were lucky.' You know Mary and Joseph, they had amazing dreams as did the wisemen. Simeon and Anna had been told by the Lord that they would see the Christ. People had visions, Angels came and talked to them, now the wisemen had great teachers and family that had passed the message down and we feel like they are so very blessed. But you know if we're if we're thinking that way; actually, you're dead wrong because you see actually what all of them had is the Holy Spirit; and we have the Holy Spirit too.

It is the Holy Spirit that we heard Jesus and Paul talking about this morning. Jesus told Nicodemus, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, they cannot enter the Kingdom of heaven. And in his great Pentecost sermon, when they ask, "men of Israel what must we do to be saved?" Peter responded, "repent and be baptized every one of you for the forgiveness of sins and you will receive the Holy Spirit." Again, we've talked about that before, the repentance part goes with forgiveness, the baptism part goes with the Holy Spirit. So when we are baptized, we become a part of the family of God because God begins to live in us. And since it's the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, He works faith in our hearts and it is through him that Christ becomes our Savior and we belong to Him.

But as we read in Romans 8 this morning, we see there's more to it than that. It is also the Holy Spirit who raised Christ from the dead and He will raise us because He lives in us if we live by the Spirit. In other words, if we let Him work faith in our heart, and we don't get in the way. It's a Holy Spirit that calls us to walk according to Him. Paul tells us that we are to set our minds on the things of the Spirit; love, joy peace,

patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; and not on the things of the flesh. I'm not going to go through that list because it's a whole lot longer. But things like pride, lust, all of that. We are to set our minds on the things of the Spirit.

When we think about the Spirit, think about what is also told to us by Jesus himself in Acts 1:8. He told his disciples, 'you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.' In John 14:26, He says, it is the Holy Spirit that will teach you all things and remind you of everything that Jesus said. Then in Matthew chapter 10, Jesus tells us 'don't even worry about what you're going to say,' it's the Holy Spirit who will give you the words.

About that time, when we hear all that, we want to use that terrible word again; **but I**. I can't do it. And again, that's a perfect place to be, because you're right, you can't. So, we really need to work on taking that word I out of our vocabulary. We don't accept Jesus into our hearts, He comes in through the power of the Holy Spirit. And if we say, Lord come into me, it's because the Holy Spirit is empowering us to do that. And likewise, we can't do anything on our own. You're right, I can't. But it is also the words of Jesus who says that with God all things are possible. So, a former math and science teacher; well, he actually can become a pastor. But it's not that he did it, it is that the Holy Spirit has worked and continues to work, I hope and pray.

But understand if you're feeling like you just don't measure up to Mary and Joseph, or Simeon and Anna, or the Wisemen, the shepherds, you are in really good company and I'm not referring to me. You are not alone if you doubt your ability. And you are not alone if you wonder; will God really empower me, teach me all things, bring to my remembrance everything Jesus said, give me the very words to speak? There are a few other people that are just like that.

Consider Moses in Genesis chapter 3; he is out tending the flock and he sees a bush burning in the distance. He goes to see it because a bush burning in the desert is not a good thing when you are raising sheep in that fire can quickly consume the food and the sheep. When he goes, he finds that there is this bush that is burning; but it is not burning up.

And then the bush talks to him and tells him ‘Moses, Moses, take off your shoes for the land you're standing on is holy ground.’ And then tells Moses and I’ve got a job for you. Go down to Pharaoh and tell him, let my people go. And if you remember and I know I talked about this back in August in a sermon; Moses’s first response was ‘I can't go and do that. Pharaoh worships all these other gods and he knows the names of all of them I don't know your name. If I go and tell Pharaoh, let my people go; he's going to say, ‘who?’ I don't know that God. So, I can't go because I don't know your name.’ That's when God comes back with His name Yahweh which means I am. I am God. But you know God didn't stop there.

He continued and he told Moses more than just I Am. He is I know. I know what Pharaoh is going to do and I will stretch out my hand against him and against the people of Egypt. He's going to hit them with the 10 plagues and Moses; you and the children of Israel are going to plunder the Egyptians. Moses’s response to that was ‘yeah but Pharaoh is probably not going to believe all that. He's probably going to say the Lord did not appear to you. God says that's OK Moses, I've got you covered on that. Take your staff throw it on the ground. He throws it on the ground and it becomes a snake. Pick it up. He goes, picks it up, it turns back into a staff. Now put your hand inside your cloak and pull it out. Oh, it's leprous, it's decaying in front of him. Put it back in your coat, pull it back out. Oh, it's healed. If that doesn't impress Pharaoh take a pitcher, go down to the Nile River; (by the way, the Nile River was considered a God). Take the water from that god, come in front of Pharaoh, pour it on the ground and it will turn to blood. It's going to look like you killed the Nile River.

Moses’s response to those three miracles? But Lord, You know, I'm not eloquent. I’m, I quote “small of speech and tongue.” God's word to that was “I'll be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.” What is Moses’ response? Oh, listen to this! Oh my Lord; and he doesn't use Lord, Yahweh. It's Adonai, God's already given His name. ‘Oh my Lord, please send someone else. Does that sound familiar? Please let somebody else do it Lord. The Lords response to that was your brother Aaron is a good speaker, take him with you. Now go. He finally went. What happened when he finally went? “And the people believed and

when they heard that the Lord Yahweh had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their reflection they bowed their heads and worshiped.” Moses was a very reluctant, questioning servant.

How about Gideon in judges 6 through 8? God comes to Gideon says get him, ‘I need you to get an army together, we are going to go down and we are going to smite those Midianites. Gideon did not say, ‘alrighty Lord, You and me, let's go.’ No, it was, ‘if you really want me to do this, I'm going to take a fleece here; I'm going to put it on the ground in the middle of the crushing floor here and in the morning if this is really You, Lord and you really want me to do this, would you have the fleece be saturated with dew and then the ground around it dry? Because you know that doesn't happen. So, when he gets up in the morning and that's exactly what happens, and the Lord says, ok, let's go. Gideon says well just one more time, I'm not quite sure here, I'm going to put the fleece out again; now understand the fleece is sopping wet. I will put the fleece out again and in the morning, let it be completely dry and the ground around it totally wet. That's what happened. What happened then? Well Gideon went and called the army together and the Lord said that army is too large. I need a smaller army and he winnowed it down to just 300 men and the three hundred men went and they smote the Midianites.

Consider Samuel. First Samuel chapter 3. Samuel is sleeping in the temple, being raised by Eli, the high priest. And the Lord comes to Samuel and says, “Samuel.” Now again, he's in God's house. Eli's outside of the temple and what does Samuel do? He gets up, runs out to Eli and says, ‘speak, here I am, you called me.’ Eli says, it wasn't me, to go back to bed.’ The Lord calls him a second time, he goes; the Lord calls him a third time, he goes; but on the third time Eli realizes and kind of points it out to Samuel. Samuel, I'm out here. I'm not in there talking to you. You are in God's house, you hear God calling you. You need to speak back to Him. Talk to Him. So, the fourth time when God says, Samuel, Samuel; this time Samuel finally says ‘speak, for your servant hears.’

We see a patient God. A patient God who came to Elijah after the whole scenario there with the prophets of Baal and fire coming down and consuming Elijah's sacrifice; and then Elijah, going to the King and saying there has been a drought for three years. You've just seen the

power of God here it comes a second time. The droughts ending and it's ending now. And it did! When the King went back to his queen, Queen Jezebel, and told her everything that had happened, Jezebel responded and said Elijah is going to die within the next 24 hours. So, what did Elijah do? Well let me quote, "then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life."

Consider Saul, not King Saul, Saul the Pharisee who we know as Saint Paul. When the Lord stops him on the road to Damascus and says, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? He said one more thing right after that. He said to him, "it is hard for you to kick against the goads." A goad was a stick that was used to poke oxen, to get them moving along. What was the Lord saying? My Spirit has been prodding you all along and you keep kicking away trying to kick the Holy Spirit away. It's getting hard isn't it? He was resisting The Holy Spirit.

But God was patient with all of them. He had to recall them, He had to convince each one of them. By the power of the Holy Spirit, each one of them submitted, each grew stronger, and each grew bold. So that Moses became the great deliverer. Gideon did defeat the Midianites with only 300 men. Samuel served as a judge and then anointed the first kings. Elijah became known as the great Prophet and literally was taken into heaven and never tasted death. Paul became the great Evangelist.

Which brings us back to us. Come. Come and see. Come and see Jesus. We saw last week He is the fulfillment of all the messianic prophecies. Come and see the Savior who says, 'go and make disciples.' Come and see that loving Savior who has given you what you need. He's given you the Holy Spirit. He has given you all of those prophecies we looked at last week. The question is, are we going to take advantage of it? Or, are we going to fall back and say, 'well if only the Lord would give me a dream?' "If only an Angel would come to me." "If only the Lord Himself would come to me." Welcome. Welcome to the Lord doing exactly that. You see, welcome to the Lord's table. This is what we celebrate in Holy Communion.

In the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.