

## THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN GENEVA

JANUARY 19, 2014 SERMON: COME AND SEE

Every church I have served or applied to as a minister asks the same basic question, "How do we attract new members?" They usually tell me what they have done in the past; in the eighties, a kind soul would bring a loaf of bread to visitors' door. Surprise! The nineties increased advertizing on billboards and church signboards, messages from God like, "How are the wife and kids? " "Miss you-God". "Stop that or I'll come down there. " The theology was shaky at times.

The 00 s thrust into the internet age, websites, power point and moving signs promised to attract more visitors. In the last two decades, video conferencing, classes online and blogs have made efforts to educate, inspire and establish a cyber church.

Moreover, yet the question remains, How do we attract new members? Maybe this is not the basic question. Maybe the question should be, "How do we witness to our faith? Alternatively, the more basic question, "How does one get to know Jesus?"

"Come and see"- It is such a simple invitation within our Gospel lesson. Yet it is the most basic and effective method of evangelism. Infact, this first encounter with Jesus as John describes it is a blueprint for Outreach and Witness.

Just imagine the situation first; Jesus has gone out to the River Jordon to be baptized by John. John's disciples are following him, hanging on to his words and teachings. Andrew and Simon Peter are serious disciples of John according to this gospel. When Jesus simply walks their way, John introduces him, "Here is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world". Introducing Jesus in such a way speaks volumes to these students of the Torah. This is the Lamb of God who walks with the Good Shepherd. This is the paschal lamb who promises to lift the burden of sin off our shoulders. Here is the promised Messiah, we have been promised.

The next thing does is recommend Jesus as their next teacher or rabbi. He ranks above me.

Thirdly, John describes the holy moment when Jesus was baptized. "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove". "I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God"

So, John introduces Jesus, he give him high recommendations and then he shares his spiritual experience of Jesus. He testifies this is God's Son and later he urges Andrew and Simon to see for themselves- Come and See. Staying with Jesus for a day was a private retreat that I wish was included in this record. We only know that it transformed Simon in such a profound way that Jesus changed his name to Peter, the rock.

What is it about Jesus that made you want to follow him? Or to join this church? Did someone say see that church, it is an involved congregation, truly the hands and feet of Christ? Qualities, purpose, ministry, mission. These are reasons to follow Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God, the prince of Peace,

Wonderful counselor, rock of our salvation, compassionate Christ, gentle savior, wisdom and Word incarnate.

Your membership may have begun with a process of introduction, recommendation and invitation. However, it will last because of someone's teachings about God/Christ and the Holy Spirit, the Triune God. In addition, I bet you remain Christians because of your spiritual experience and the witness you may have shared.

Members are should not be coerced; they are called. Called as disciples and witnesses to God's presence throughout the ages. Jesus does not name himself, he just says, "Come and see for yourselves". There is a confident servant of God worth knowing. This is the miracle of the following Jesus' Way; his invitation is simply to experience him. The change and the challenge will happen. Look at the positive effects of Christians who have stood up for the oppressed and hungry. People like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks. Those who share their faith, unabashedly in political and public arenas, continually inspire me. Maybe separation of church and state has silenced our witness. However, the principles taught by Jesus work their way speeches such as this one by Martin before he was killed.

Well, I do not know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land. And I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.

No matter who you are, what you do, as a Child of God, a follower of Christ, you are called to witness to the experience of God here and now. It could change someone's path, maybe even your own. This is the higher call, Christ call we all can offer.

"Come and See" the Goodness of the Lord, in Christ Jesus.