

Come and See!
A Sermon for Sardis Baptist Church
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John 1:29-42

If you flip open your Bible to page one, you'll read about the creation of the world as described in Genesis. And there in Genesis, we hear about a mysterious God – God is really more of a creative force: a breath, a feeling, a spirit that seeps into the universe and forms order out of darkness and chaos. It's a beautiful image to be sure, but it's hard to call such an image warm and fuzzy. I don't know if you've ever tried to hug a mysterious force – I haven't, but I would imagine it's pretty hard. For starters, how do you see it, and touch it, and feel it, and what part of its being do you wrap your arms around?

But it's not just Genesis. In Exodus, God's name is revealed as *YHWH* or *I am who I am*, or *I am who I will be*. Not nearly as personal as Mom, or Dad, or even Steve, is it? And of course, you don't want God to sing you a lullaby, or send you a wink. Other than Moses, the people of Israel were told to cover their eyes and ears in the presence of God – hearing and seeing God was hazardous to one's health, lethal even. In other places, God is often compared to a rock, or a high cliff, or a mountain. Again, none of these are bad images, it's just that none of them are very warm and personable. Let's be real: none of us is going to the malt shop or buying an airbrushed license plate for a presence that is unanimated or invisible or distant or cold.

Thank Goodness for the Season of Epiphany! And thank goodness for the Gospel of John!

John's Gospel tells us that this creative force, this organizing principle, this spiritual matter, this word or logos, has been made manifest in the presence of Jesus. The ruach – that is the breath of God – is something that can be seen, and heard, and touched, and even hugged. It's Jesus. And Jesus is our epiphany!

Each Christmas Eve we celebrate the story of shepherds seeing the child in the manger. And each Epiphany we give thanks for magi who see Jesus as an infant.

And today, we celebrate an adult Epiphany. John the Baptist has paved the way for the ministry of Jesus. We see Jesus called and baptized and affirmed for the work ahead. The Epiphany is extended to an even larger audience.

But here's the part of today's text that caught my attention. Two of John's disciples see Jesus, and they begin to follow him. Jesus notices them, and asks, "What are you looking for?"

"We want to know where you are staying," the two men say.

"Come and see!" Jesus tells them.

That's the phrase that catches my attention. Instantaneously, God is no longer mysterious. God is not distant. God is not guarded. God is not a secret. The disciples are invited to see Jesus for themselves. Emanuel is here on earth.

This is really important. And this is a marked difference from Mark's gospel, and to an extent, Matthew and Luke's.

Jesus is no secret. Jesus is not something to be hidden under a bushel, nor to be processed in deep thought. God is revealed here. Now. In flesh and blood. Something to be seen and heard and touched and even hugged.

Where does Jesus stay? Come and see for yourselves! And so they did.

The disciples learned that Jesus is found at Samaritan wells, and tax collectors' tables, and wineless weddings. And in homes where death has sucked the marrow out of life. And in leper colonies, and in synagogues where the righteous aren't always so righteous. He's found washing the dusty feet of servants, and praying in quiet gardens, and resting in the homes of friends. He's found living among the poor and the sick and the destitute and the marginalized; he's been depressed, and addicted, and forsaken, and betrayed, and if we're really honest, he's even been among the doubting. And he lives each day, walking a road that leads not to power and privilege, but rather, a road that leads to humiliation, and eventually, a cross.

But more than anything, Christ lives in creation. Here. Among us.

And whether it's January 6th or July 6th, this is our epiphany: The God who created us, and who created all that is, dwelled, and still dwells among us. And even better, that God beckons us: "Come and See!"

It's a big, bright world out there, Sardis Baptist Church. As you head out back out into it this afternoon, remember this: God is with us. And God has walked in our very shoes. And God will continue to walk in our shoes.

But you need not take my word for it. If only you'll ask, Jesus will invite you to come and see for yourself.

May it be so. And may it be soon. Amen.