

John 1:35-39a

[John] 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.

PG: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

PG: When Jesus asks in verse 38, "What are you looking for?" these are the first words he speaks in the Gospel of John. "What are you looking for?" He could be asking us. Maybe he is. His next words are equally powerful – "Come and see." I'm not going to tell you about all the things you should believe, about Christology or theology or any ology at all. I'm not going to quiz you about your faith or your intentions or your commitment. Just come and see.

In John's Gospel, this phrase, "Come and see" is an invitation to encounter the living God. When Nathaniel asks, "Can anything good come out of Bethlehem?" Phillip says, "Come and see." When the woman at the well goes to her people to tell them about the man she had met who had told her everything she had ever done, she says to them, "Come and see."

Can it be as simple as this? Come and see? There is a world of people out there, just outside these doors, who need what we have, who need to feel what we have felt, who need to know the grace of God in Christ that we know. And all we have to do is to ask them to "Come and see."

PW: (Standing up, from side) Pardon me, Pastor Greg, but that's not simple at all, asking people to come to church with you.

PG: Pastor Wendy?

PW: Well, I couldn't help listening. You know, of course, that the average Lutheran invites someone to church about once every 23 years, right?

PG: Well, yes...

PW: So, when you say that you can just ask someone to "come and see," well, that's not a very easy thing to do, especially for Lutherans.

PG: (coming down from pulpit, and walking with PW to center) Why do you think that is?

PW: Lutherans are private people. Remember that statistic from the video we showed at confirmation, that 90% of children don't know what their parents believe about God?

PG: I didn't know what my parents believed.

PW: You had parents? Wow!

PG: Yeah, they wore fur pelts and carried clubs. Why else do you think we find it hard to invite people to church?

PW: Well, maybe because we worry that the church won't make them feel welcome.

PG: But every time I've seen people visit, it seems like the congregation is friendly and welcoming. You're right,

though, if you were worried about that, it might make you a little nervous about asking your own friends to come.

PW: It also seems like in this culture people aren't encouraged to talk about their faith. Why do you think Lutherans all sit in the back of the church? We don't always know exactly what we believe and we feel awkward talking about it. We get a little tongue-tied.

PG: But, to invite someone to church, you don't really need to talk about your faith, necessarily. After all, what does Jesus say? Just "Come and see."

PW: We could do some things to help the congregation invite people to church.

PG: Like what?

PW: Well, we could print up some cards that they could give to people whom they might want to invite.

PG: What would the cards say?

PW: Oh, maybe "Please join us for worship" and give the name and address of Saint Nicholas, maybe the worship times and our names and phone number.

PG: Something like ... this? (He holds up a card)

PW: Exactly.

PG: But, you know what else we could do – we could offer training in inviting people to church.

PW: How would we train people to invite people to church?

PG: Well, maybe we could demonstrate it. For example, imagine that you're having coffee with someone ...

PW: I don't drink coffee.

PG: OK, then, Chinese food.

PW: I don't ...

PG: (interrupts) Well, whatever. Let's imagine I'm sitting with you and I say, "Say, Pastor Wendy ..."

PW: We're going to invite other pastors to worship with us?

PG: It's just an example. Make up a name.

PW: OK, Bonnie Sue.

PG: All right, then. I'd say, "Say, Bonnie Sue, I've got this great church I'm going to. I really enjoy the worship and the people. It's friendly and the music is great and there are lots of things for the children to do. There's a nursery and Sunday School. I think you'd like it."

PW: When are the services?

PG: Well, we have services at 7:45, 9:00 and 11:15 – I usually go to the 7:45/9:00/11:15 service and I'd be glad to sit with you.

PW: Let me write this down. Oh, I don't have a pen or paper. Well ...

PG: Don't worry, it's all on this card here. We're having "invite a friend Sunday" on October 22 – let me write the date on

this card. If you want I can call you the night before and we can meet you at the church or pick you up.

PW: Well, thanks, I really appreciate it. We've been looking for a place to worship, the kids have been asking about it, but I haven't known any place where we'd be comfortable.

PG: Well, we've just called a real nice Pastor who is dynamic and the young people all really like her ...

PW: Enough already. What if the person says no?

PG: And they might – not everyone will say yes the first time. But at least they know about us and they know that you care enough to invite them to join us at worship.

PW: When would we do this training?

PG: We could do it instead of a sermon.

PW: I think we just did.

PG: (Addressing the congregation) There are lots of reasons to invite our friends to church. We do it because our Lord commanded it saying "Go and make disciples." We do it because we have something that we want to share. We do it because we care about our friends enough that we want them to find peace and meaning and purpose and that's what our Lord offers all whom he calls.

Whatever your reason might be, as it turns out, we **are** having "Invite a Friend" Sunday on Oct. 22 and that would be a good time to do your "once every 23 years" invitation. Think about your friends – think about whom you care about enough to extend them Christ's offer of eternal life. Amen.