

An Invitation to Come and See

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The curiosity of a child can take us to new heights of awareness. We just never know what a child will invite us to come and see and do.

A child or grandchild can always invite us to come and see what they discovered. They would invite us to come and see the small dandelions or later when they had white puffy topos, the wooly caterpillar crawling across the sidewalk, the pretty smelling lilac bushes, the animal shaped clouds or the castle in the sand box.

Or when they played inside the house we were invited to come and see the dinosaur made out of play dough, the Duplo house, the crayon pictures of the family, or the castle made from packing boxes. There were invitations to come, see and enter the tent made from sheets that occupied the living room. Have you had one of those in your living room?

There is no telling what a child or grandchild will invite us to come and see. Sometimes we adults are so busy looking at things and events with eyes of practicality that we lose sight of what children come to see in life. Come and see!

Whenever an invitation arrives at our home, we reflect on if it is possible to accept, who is sending; is family or friends, how much will it take to get there, will that girl friend or boyfriend from our past be there, or will those folks look the same? We also ask, what will they think of us? How have I changed?

Accepting an invitation means we will be able to go and see firsthand that special event. And we will interact with people. The resolve is to go and see who's there and to enjoy the event. Even though we've all changed.

As children of God, we too can come and see the Creator in a new light and with different perspectives of love and grace. The light that has come into our lives is through Jesus Christ who illuminates us to witness to the goodness of God's love. Come and see!

Jesus calls and invites ordinary folks like you and me to follow him and become his disciples. The Gospel of John tells the story of Jesus calling Philip to follow him. Philip accepts the invitation to follow the Lord and then goes to find Nathanael and invited him to the Lord. Yet **46Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"** Yet, the invitation was specific as **Philip said to him, "Come and see."** With these words, Nathanael goes to see this Messiah called Jesus.

Jesus already knew who was coming with Philip and affirmed him in his honesty. Nathanael came to believe when he said, **"Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"** **50Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these."** **51And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."**

Nathanael discovered the Son of God when Philip invited him to see the Lord. He came to see the Lord with a heart and mind set on bearing witness to the blessedness of God. His ministry of witness to the good news of Christ brought many to come and see the Savior, the Redeemer.

The calling of Samuel by God, while serving in the temple, attests to his invitation to come and see. He didn't realize it at the time that God was calling to him. Each time that Samuel heard the voice, he responded with "Here I am!" And then went to the priest Eli.

After the third time, Eli perceived that God was calling to Samuel. **Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. ⁹Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "speak, LORD, for your servant is listening."' So Samuel went and lay down in his place.** Then, the ¹⁰...LORD came and stood there, calling as before, 'Samuel! Samuel!' and Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.' His response to God's invitation, was to serve wholeheartedly.

Philip and Nathanael accepted the invitation of Jesus to come and see what he would do with their lives as disciples. Samuel accepted the call by God to faithfully serve. We each have been invited to come and see how Jesus would guide our life and faith. He's asking us to respond into the activity of love. God can call to us and at any time.

Back in mid-January of 2017, I was in the midst of an interview process with a presbytery in New York state for an Interim Executive Presbyter position. It was going to be a hard position as I would be going into that area to work with a dysfunctional and a totally collapsed presbytery as well as working with 60 churches in various levels of conflict and uncertainty.

In the midst of that interviewing process, a lead trainer for interims in our denomination sent me an email to see if I would be interested in visiting with a church going through difficult times. Since he gave me little information, I inquired as to the size of the church and the location. He gave me the size and said near Tucson, Arizona. I said to myself, "Wow! That's on the other side of the country and it is hotter than blazes there!" of course, I did use another word for blazes!

So I sent my personal information form to him and he forwarded to someone in de Cristo Presbytery. I then got a call from the chairperson of the search committee to see if I would be willing to have a conversation. Isn't that right, Tommy? He knows because he called.

I agreed to begin the process of interviewing through Skype as well as here in Green Valley. Reference checks were done and I received information on the church and any other information to help me to better understand the situation. The more I heard and read about Valley, the more I grieved for you and with you, for your pastor and his family, for your Associate Pastors, Diane and Paul, and for the support staff. My ardent prayers were and are for comfort, compassion, and peace.

The many hours of prayer as well as discussions with Judy, I became convinced that I was to take the call to become your Transitional Pastor here at Valley Presbyterian Church. Even before the long trek here, I was asking God to

give me guidance on what we can possibly do to move the congregation and this body into the next chapter of life especially after such a trauma.

Well some people have been asking me, why are you here? And you know who you are. So why am I here? For the reason known only to God, I am here as a servant to a loving and compassionate Creator and Sustainer. I came here to see how God is going to bless this congregation into the future. I am also here to minister among you and to lead a church wide process to help you move from what was to where God is calling you into the future. Hope in that future. Primarily, I am here to help this congregation to work through difficult and hurtful situations that have gotten you to this place and to get you ready for your next pastor. In other words, to look for a new future and a different reality.

So friends, I am inviting you, each of you, regardless of your migration patterns, to join me in overcoming hurtful behaviors and practices, in seeking solutions willingly so peace and love can reign, in finding a servant heart that serves with joy, and in pursuing innovation and imagination into the future. Come and see! Come and see!

Most of all, I am inviting you to remember why you are here and who you serve in this journey of faith. To come and see what God has in mind for this congregation because Jesus is asking us to come and see him and to move into the future with a sense of hope, a sense of confidence and a sense of newness.

God holds us in this moment of time so that we can move into the future and not be afraid of the future. Someone told me they don't like change. You know, every morning it's going to be a different day. The thing of it is, we have to put ourselves in God's hands and in the security that God will take of us. I believe that something beautiful is awaiting you the future and I believe that God is and will be with us through it all. So, my dear brothers and sisters, come and see what God through Christ has in store for this congregation and for each one of you. We are coming to see Jesus once again and to be placed in God's ever loving arms.

Psalm 139:7-12

Where can I go from your spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

**⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.**

**⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,**

**¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.**

**¹¹ If I say, "surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"**

**¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.**

My dear brothers and sisters, God invites us, individually and corporately, to be a living witness to the work and ministry of the Almighty in this place and in

this time. This invitation to come and see the Lord is key to how we live our lives and bear witness to the grace and love of God. Oh yes, we come to church on Sunday but how do we live the rest of the week? Let's invite people to come and see Jesus as Lord. He is the greatest Gift of all. May our words, actions and lives reflect God's love. May we never lose sight of Jesus, the one who invites us to be children of love and peace.

Come and see the grace of God and love of Christ.

Amen.

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Scriptural Support:

1 SAMUEL 3:1-10

Samuel's Calling and Prophetic Activity

³Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

² At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; ³the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. ⁴Then the LORD called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' and he said, 'Here I am!' ⁵and ran to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call; lie down again.' So he went and lay down. ⁶The LORD called again, 'Samuel!' Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call, my son; lie down again.' ⁷Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. ⁸The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. ⁹Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening."' So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

¹⁰ Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'

John 1:43-51 (NRSV)

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael (BARTHOLOMEW BY MOST ACCOUNTS) and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

⁴⁷When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, “Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!” ⁴⁸Nathanael asked him, “Where did you get to know me?” Jesus answered, “I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.”

⁴⁹Nathanael replied, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

⁵⁰Jesus answered, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.” ⁵¹And he said to him, “Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”