

Come and See

John 1:29-34 [MW20-03]

Sermon preached by Rev Wayne Thornton at Mangawhai and Wellsford, Sunday 19 January 2020

What is the most observant reptile?

An investi – gator!

Where are doctors most observant of their patients in the hospital?

In the ICU.

A person down on their luck thought, “I must be the most unobservant person in the world.” Then they thought, “Well, maybe other people are equally unobservant and I just haven’t noticed before.”

Have you ever had the experience of reading a Bible passage

- that you've read many times before
- and suddenly a word or phrase that you hadn't noticed before jumps out?
- that's what happened to me when I read the gospel set down for today
- I've read this passage heaps of times, but never noticed before
- what John the Baptist says in John 1, verses 31 and 33
- “I didn't know who he was”, referring to Jesus
- and again, “Before this I didn't know who he was”
- John the Baptist says he didn't know who Jesus was
- he says that, John actually says that
- I had never noticed that before and now that I have, it's like wooo
- what is going on here ... ???

This is what Jesus himself said about John the Baptist (in Matthew 11 and Luke 7):

Was he a prophet, yes he certainly was, and more than a prophet.

I tell you that no one ever born on earth is greater than John the Baptist

And yet this person, the greatest ever born on earth, says he did not know who Jesus was

- you know what I felt when I read that?
- Relief. Relief!
- if even John the Baptist didn't get everything about Jesus
- then it's okay that I don't get everything about Jesus
- it's not the end of the world to have blindspots, overlook things
- don't beat yourself up about it
- that was the first point ...

... quickly followed by a rather discomfoting and disturbing second point

- if John the Baptist didn't know who Jesus was
- and remember the great write up he got from that same Jesus
- how the heck are ordinary people going to recognise Jesus?
- how are they going to know who he is?
- we who are in the church sometimes have trouble with this
- how on earth are people outside the church going to have any chance at all?
- worrying, troubling, concerning ...

Then I realised that I think John the Baptist, and indeed you and me and people in church

- are doing something that people outside the church are mostly not doing
- we are looking, looking in the direction of Jesus

Remember John the Baptist did not know who

- but he knew someone was coming and he was looking for them
- most people outside the church are not aware anyone is coming
- and are most definitely not looking

John the Baptist was also aware of something else that most people outside the church

- are completely ignorant of and don't notice
- and in fact don't give importance to
- John the Baptist was conscious of his calling
- it's part of the reason Jesus gave John such a great recommendation
- John was conscious of his calling
- and boldly and fully and conscientiously carried it out

What was John the Baptist's calling?

[space for answers]

- in the second part of verse 31 John says:
"I came to baptise you with water, so that everyone in Israel would see him"
- John the Baptist's calling helped others to see Jesus
- we'll come back to that in a moment

This reminds us, each one of us, to be conscious of our particular calling

- yes we have one
- we are called to do many things as a follower of Jesus
- but we each have a distinctive and particular calling
- what is your calling ... ???

It could be to pray with, or for people

- it could be that you are an encourager
- perhaps you are good at befriending people
- you could have a ministry of hospitality
- perhaps you are a good teacher
- or can care well for young ones
- may be you provide a gentle listening ear
- or bring comfort to those who are ill
- you may enjoy helping out in practical ways
- there are just so many ways in which we as God's people may be called

I invite you to spend a moment considering what your particular distinctive calling may be

[time for consideration]

And remember, in all that we do, be conscious of helping people see Jesus

John the Baptist did not know who Jesus was

- but he carried on doing what he was called to do
- and, and, he kept looking
- he knew he was supposed to keep looking and he did
- and his looking was rewarded

John 1, verses 32 to 34:

... I saw the Spirit come down on him like a dove from heaven. And the Spirit stayed on him. Before this I didn't know who he was. But the one who sent me to baptize with water had told me, "You will see the Spirit come down and stay on someone. Then you will know that he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit." I saw this happen, and I tell you that he is the Son of God.

And so John the Baptist saw, and knew

- which reminds us to keep on looking
because like John the Baptist we will see

John the Baptist did something that helped people to see Jesus

- he knew what it was like not to know Jesus, not to see
he also knew that the people he spoke to did not know to be looking
- his calling was to get people ready so they could see Jesus for themselves
so they would be prepared to hear and follow and change their lives for good
- "come and see," said John the Baptist
"get ready, here he is"

And John did one more thing which is of crucial importance

- when he himself recognised Jesus, when he saw Jesus
he pointed Jesus out to those around him
- John 1:29 - 30 tells us
*The next day, John saw Jesus coming toward him and said: Here is the Lamb of God
who takes away the sin of the world! He is the one I told you about ...*

Earlier we considered our "individual calling"

- it seems to me that we also have a calling as "the church"
the body of Christ who gather in this place
a collective or community calling
- what is it that we, as this church community, can do
that will enable people to see Jesus?

Please talk to those around you and see what you can come up with

[3 – 4 minutes discussion]

What have we come up with ... ???

[share responses]

Here's the story of a bishop of the last century and how he got his call, his vocation:

He was a noted evangelizer, making it his special outreach to cynics, unbelievers, and scoffers. He liked to tell the story of a young man who used to stand outside the cathedral shouting derogatory remarks at the people entering to worship. He would call them fools and all kinds of names. The people tried to ignore him but it was difficult. So finally the parish priest went outside to confront the young man, who simply ranted and raved against everything the priest told him. Finally the priest addressed the young scoffer. "Look, let's get this over with once and for all. I'm going to make a deal with you. I'm going to put you on a dare and I bet you can't do it."

The young man shot back, "I can do anything you propose, you black-robed wimp!"

"Fine," said the priest. "All I ask you to do is to come into the sanctuary with me and I want you to stare at the figure of Christ and I want you to scream at the very top of your lungs, as loud as you can, 'Christ died on the cross for me and I don't care one bit.'"

So the young man screamed as loud as he could, looking at the figure, "Christ died on the cross for me and I don't care one bit."

The priest said, "Very good. Now do it again."

And again the young man screamed, with a little more hesitancy, "Christ died on the cross for me and I don't care one bit."

"You're almost done now," said the priest. "One more time."

The young man raised his fist, kept looking at the statue, but the words wouldn't come. He just could not look at the face of Christ and say that anymore.

The real punch line came when, after he told the story, the bishop said, "I was that young man. That young man, that defiant young man was me. I thought I didn't need God, but found out that I did."

The priest, the very wise and caring priest

- invited that young man to come and see Jesus
and when that young man finally came face to face with Jesus
his life was forever changed
- when you come and see Jesus, your life is changed for the good

This coming week I encourage you to do two things

- first, to reflect on your particular calling and to really take it up
because in doing so you will enable at least one other person
to see Jesus for themselves
- secondly, please pray for us as the people who know Jesus in this place
that as a church in this coming year we will enable the people of our community
to see and respond to Jesus