

**Come and See**  
*January 18, 2009*  
(Epiphany 2 - Year B)  
John 1: 43-51  
*St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas*

In the Gospel of John, Jesus finds Philip and then Philip follows Jesus. Philip then goes and tells Nathanael that they have found the Messiah, who is Jesus from the dinky, podunk town of Nazareth.

To this news, Nathanael sarcastically responds:

“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

And Philip replies:

“Come and see.”

Whenever I hear that question in John's Gospel:

Can anything good come out of Nazareth?

I cannot help but equate that question to:

Can anything good come out of College Station?

Because when I was a high school senior looking at colleges, I asked that same question:

Can anything good come out of College Station?

And, just like Philip's response to Nathanael, the answer was:

Come and see.

As a high school senior, I had applied to 3 universities:

Texas, Texas A&M and Baylor.

Even though my Mom had gone to the University of Texas and I had worn orange to football games all of my life, I wanted to go and check out Aggieland, with an open mind.

So, on a summer day, my parents and I went to visit Texas A&M University.

We arrived at the Memorial Student Center for our tour of the campus.

We met friendly students who were very informative and helpful.

As we walked around campus, everyone greeted us by saying:

“Howdy!”

We learned about the many, fine traditions of Texas A&M and I found

those traditions to be inspiring and meaningful.

After all of our touring, my parents and I ate lunch together on campus. At the lunch table, we all admitted that we were very impressed by what we had experienced and seen at Texas A&M. Maybe A&M was a real possibility for me.

Then, right before we headed back to Houston down Highway 6, we made a quick stop into the Aggie Bookstore. I took one look at all the maroon T-shirts, the maroon backpacks, the maroon sweatshirts and the maroon pencils, And I turned to my parents and I said: “I just can’t do it. I just can’t be an Aggie.”

My experience at Texas A&M that day confirmed for me that my blood really did bleed orange. Yet, even to this day, I have great appreciation for my Aggie brothers and sisters, because I was willing to take a look at Texas A&M. I found out that something good *can* come out of College Station. However, the first step was that I had to come and see.

In the Gospel of John, Philip tells Nathanael to just come and see Jesus of Nazareth. And after meeting Jesus and experiencing him, Nathanael completely changes his mind about Jesus. Nathanael changes his mind and he realizes that something good *can* actually come out of Nazareth. However, Nathanael had to come and see.

If you notice, Philip did not change Nathanael’s mind by sweet talking or arm twisting or presenting a case for belief in Jesus. Philip did not change Nathanael’s mind by showing off the church’s gym and fitness center. Philip simply says to Nathanael: Come and see.

Some times people will ask me what my plan or vision is for the long-

term growth of St. Alban's.

However, it doesn't really matter what kind of long-term plans I concoct to grow St. Alban's.

For the only way that St. Alban's will continue to grow is if you simply invite other people to come and see.

For I believe - if people will just come and see St. Alban's Episcopal Church, then many preconceived ideas about Christianity as a rigid and judgmental and hypocritical religion will be changed.

And if people come and see St. Alban's, then they will meet Jesus, and lives will be changed.

For I believe, with all my heart, that St. Alban's Episcopal Church is a unique witness in this city of Waco -

A unique place where people can worship in beauty and holiness, and where people can reach out to others, in love and without fear.

But, the first step is that you have to invite them to come and see.

We have a unique opportunity to invite others to come and see the unique witness of St. Alban's on this next Tuesday morning.

At 9 o'clock this Tuesday morning, on Inauguration Day, we are offering a service of Morning Prayer, with hymns and music.

And when you invite others to come and see on this Tuesday morning, they will experience that we are not a people who are driven by fear, but we are a people of God who are driven by faith.

When you invite others to come and see, they will experience the unparalleled beauty and integrity of the worship of the Episcopal Church, where prayers from *The Book of Common Prayer* will be offered -

Praying for our leaders and for peace and for justice -

Recognizing that our salvation and hope does not come from any President, but our salvation and hope come from God.

When you invite others to come and see, they will experience that it is actually possible to worship and pray together -

As Republicans and Democrats and liberals and conservatives and blacks and whites and Hispanics -

Without getting caught up in the divisions and tiresome rhetoric that have hijacked churches and faith communities in this country.

For this world is starving for the witness and ministry of the Episcopal Church where all people, *all people*, are treated with respect and dignity and love.

But, the first step is that you have to invite them to come and see.

However, I do not believe that we only meet Jesus within these church walls.

Nathanael asks Philip:

Can anything good come from Nazareth?

And we also ask:

Can anything good come from East Waco?

And we have an opportunity to come and see, as we serve dinner this Thursday evening at the Doris Miller Elementary PTA Dinner.

I invite you to come across the Brazos River and see Jesus in the teachers and the parents and the children in this school.

Your world will be enlarged and your mind will be changed about poverty and education and unemployment.

Your mind will be changed about those who come from Nazareth.

But first, you have to come and see.

We have a building on our church campus that is named the St. Alban's Outreach Center.

And we have done a good job of filling this building with ministry to children, especially through the ministries of the arts.

However, I will continue to invite and to push and to prod us to get out of our shell and to meet Jesus in the people of this neighborhood and beyond.

For I believe that we encounter Jesus most profoundly when we meet men and women and children outside of these church walls.

But first, you have to come and see.

For the Christian faith and life is not about a set of beliefs and rules, nor is it even about stained glass windows and silver chalices.

The Christian faith and life is about changing our mind about those who

come from Nazareth.  
The Christian faith and life is about meeting Jesus - who will change  
your life.

Can anything good come out of Nazareth?  
Come and see.

AMEN.

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