

John 1:43-51
January 14, '18

“GO & DO”

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, A FRIEND NAMED DON INVITED ME TO BECOME PART OF A GROUP.

HE SAID HE THOUGHT IT WAS SOMETHING I MIGHT ENJOY & HE WONDERED IF I'D BE WILLING TO GIVE IT A TRY.

HE SAID, “*YOU DON'T HAVE TO COMMIT TO JOINING OR ANYTHING – JUST COME & SEE WHAT IT'S LIKE AND THEN YOU CAN DECIDE LATER IF YOU WANT TO BECOME A REGULAR MEMBER OF THE GROUP.*”

DON MADE THE SAME PITCH TO ME SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE I FINALLY AGREED TO GIVE IT A TRY.

IT WAS ONLY AFTER HE EXPLAINED EVERYTHING ABOUT IT AND ANSWERED ALL THE QUESTIONS I HAD BEFORE I WOULD MAKE A COMMITMENT TO EVEN TRY THIS GROUP.

WHEN I FINALLY SAID I'D ATTEND, DON SAID, “*GREAT. I'LL TELL YOU WHAT – I'LL PICK YOU UP AT 6:30 ON TUESDAY SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO FIND IT YOURSELF OR WALK IN ALONE.*”

WHEN I THINK ABOUT THAT EXPERIENCE & THE DIFFICULTY I HAD IN MAKING A COMMITMENT TO ATTEND THAT GATHERING & JOIN THAT GROUP, IT HELPS ME UNDERSTAND WHAT SOMEONE GOES THROUGH IN MAKING A DECISION TO BECOME PART OF THE CHURCH.

I DIDN'T IMMEDIATELY SAY “YES” TO DON'S INVITATION, BUT HE DIDN'T GIVE UP.

NEITHER DID HE PRESSURE ME, THOUGH.

HE WAITED A FEW MONTHS & THEN APPROACHED ME AGAIN.

DON ALSO MADE IT A POINT TO TELL ME VERY CLEARLY WHY HE THOUGHT I WOULD ENJOY THE GROUP & HE ALSO CLEARLY EXPLAINED SOME THE THINGS THE GROUP DID.

AND THEN, WHEN I FINALLY MADE THE DECISION TO GIVE IT A TRY, DON DIDN'T JUST SAY, "*GREAT – I'LL SEE YOU THERE.*"

HE TOLD ME HE'D PICK ME UP & TAKE ME SO I WOULDN'T FEEL INTIMIDATED & UNCOMFORTABLE WALKING IN ALONE.

IF YOU WERE WRITING A "HOW TO" MANUAL ABOUT INVITING A FRIEND TO CHURCH, WOULDN'T DON'S APPROACH BE A PERFECT GUIDE?

IN REALITY, ALL DON WAS DOING WAS SIMPLY FOLLOWING THE APPROACH THAT WE FIND PHILIP USING WITH NATHANIEL IN THIS PASSAGE WE'VE READ FROM JOHN'S GOSPEL.

HE EXPRESSES ENTHUSIASM FOR SOMETHING HE'S EXPERIENCED & HE INVITES NATHANIEL TO "*COME & SEE.*"

THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST-FREQUENTLY REFERRED-TO PASSAGES WHEN WE TALK ABOUT EVANGELISM.

IT'S SUCH A SIMPLE APPROACH.

"COME & SEE."

IT'S NOT A MATTER OF BROW-BEATING OR CAJOLING OR BEGGING.

EVEN WHEN NATHANIEL EXPRESSES DISDAIN WITH HIS "*CAN ANYTHING GOOD COME OUT OF NAZARETH*" SKEPTICISM, PHILIP DOESN'T TRY TO PERSUADE OR ARGUE OR CONVINCHE HIS FRIEND.

IN HIS DAY, NATHANIEL WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ALONE IN HIS NEGATIVE THOUGHTS ABOUT SOMEONE FROM NAZARETH.

AND WE KNOW HE WOULD HAVE COUNTERPARTS TODAY – PEOPLE WHO WOULD REFER TO A WHOLE LOT OF "NAZARETHS" IN

THE WORLD IN A DISPARAGING, CONDESCENDING & VULGAR FASHION, HAVING NO REGARD OR RESPECT FOR ANYONE OTHER THAN THEIR OWN KIND.

BUT NOTICE THAT WHEN NATHANIEL DISPLAYS THIS KIND OF IGNORANCE & BIGOTRY, PHILIP DOESN'T BERATE HIM OR ARGUE WITH HIM.

HE SIMPLY SAYS, "COME & SEE."

IT SEEMS SO VERY SIMPLE.

AND YET, IF IT IS, WHY ARE THERE SO FEW OF US WHO FOLLOW PHILIP'S EXAMPLE?

WHY DON'T MORE OF US INVITE FRIENDS TO JOIN US HERE?

THAT'S NOT AN ACCUSATION.

IT'S SIMPLY POINTING OUT THE REALITY OF WHAT WE ALL KNOW IS TRUE.

BUT HERE'S SOMETHING ELSE THAT'S TRUE – THE NUMBER ONE REASON THAT PEOPLE GIVE FOR JOINING A CHURCH OR FIRST ATTENDING A CHURCH IS – SOMEONE INVITED THEM.

IT'S NOT THE BUILDING.

IT'S NOT THE MUSIC.

IT'S NOT THE PROGRAMS.

IT'S NOT THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

IT'S NOT THE PREACHING.

MAKE NO MISTAKE – ALL OF THOSE ARE IMPORTANT FACTORS IN THE REASON SOMEONE RETURNS TO A CHURCH A SECOND TIME, BUT THE MAIN REASON THEY SHOW UP THE FIRST TIME IS BECAUSE SOMEONE INVITED THEM!

"WAIT A SECOND," YOU SAY. "I DON'T THINK THAT'S TRUE HERE. IF YOU ASK THE LAST 25 PEOPLE WHO JOINED THIS CONGREGATION

WHY THEY CAME HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME, I DON'T THINK IT WOULD BE BECAUSE SOMEONE INVITED THEM."

IF THAT'S TRUE – AND I DON'T DOUBT THAT IT IS – THAT EMPHASIZES THE POINT EVEN MORE CLEARLY!

AND IT DOES SO IN A VERY EXCITING FASHION!

THINK ABOUT IT – IF PEOPLE ARE STILL JOINING THE CHURCH FOR WHAT ARE CLEARLY SECONDARY REASONS TO BE HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE, WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF THIS CHURCH FAMILY IF WE ALL TOOK MORE SERIOUSLY THE PHILIP CHALLENGE TO INVITE OTHERS TO “*COME & SEE?*”

THE VERY FUTURE OF THE CHURCH – THIS PARTICULAR CHURCH INCLUDED – DEPENDS UPON ALL OF US SUMMONING UP THE COURAGE TO INVITE SOMEONE TO COME & SEE WHAT WE HAVE FOUND IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF THIS GATHERING.

OF COURSE, THAT ASSUMES THAT YOU ACTUALLY HAVE FOUND SOMETHING IMPORTANT HERE.

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT WHEN WE WONDER ABOUT CHURCH GROWTH – WHEN WE THINK ABOUT THAT DREADED WORD – EVANGELISM -THAT WE SO PAINSTAKINGLY AVOID, THAT'S REALLY WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT.

WE'VE BEEN AGONIZING OVER THIS QUESTION FOR YEARS, HAVEN'T WE?

WHAT'S THE REAL KEY TO CHURCH GROWTH?

WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT IN EVANGELISM?

JUST THIS PAST WEEK, I RECEIVED AN EMAIL FROM A CHURCH CONSULTING FIRM.

IT READ: “I’VE OFTEN BEEN ASKED BY PASTORS WHO HAVE A TRUE DESIRE TO REACH THE UNCHURCHED, ‘WHAT ONE THING CAN I DO TO REACH MORE PEOPLE FOR CHRIST?’

FOR YEARS I’VE REPLIED THAT THERE’S NO MAGIC BULLET. BUT I’VE BEEN WRONG.

AFTER OVER A DECADE OF RESEARCH & TRAINING IN EVANGELISM, STUDYING CHURCHES LARGE & SMALL ALL OVER THE WORLD – I BELIEVE I HAVE DISCOVERED AN OVERLOOKED MAGIC BULLET FOR EVANGELISM.”

AFTER SCROLLING DOWN A FEW LINES, THE EMAIL CONTINUES: “AND I’LL BE DIVING INTO THIS IN GREAT DETAIL NEXT MONTH AT OUR ALL NEW PASTOR’S CONFERENCE AT DISNEY WORLD, ORLANDO, FLORIDA.”

SO, I SUPPOSE IF YOU WANT TO KNOW THE KEY – THE SECRET – THE MAGIC BULLET TO EVANGELISM - YOU’RE JUST GOING TO HAVE TO SEND ME TO DISNEY WORLD IN A COUPLE WEEKS TO FIND OUT!

OR....I COULD JUST STAY HERE & ENCOURAGE YOU TO LEARN FROM PHILIP AND HIS “COME & SEE” INVITATION TO NATHANIEL.

BECAUSE HERE’S THE THING – YOU DON’T HAVE TO HAVE A MAGIC BULLET.

YOU DON’T HAVE TO HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS.

YOU DON’T HAVE TO PREPARE YOURSELF TO SQUELCH SOMEONE’S DOUBTS.

YOU DON’T HAVE TO ARGUE THE VALIDITY OF YOUR FAITH.

EVEN WHEN SOMEONE IS AS SKEPTICAL AS NATHANIEL AND ASKS, “CAN ANYTHING GOOD COME OUT OF THE CHURCH?”, YOU NEED ONLY REPLY -“COME & SEE.”

“WELL, CHRISTIANS ARE JUDGMENTAL & EXCLUSIVE.”

“COME & SEE.”

“ALL THEY DO IN CHURCH IS ASK FOR MONEY.”

“COME & SEE.”

“WORSHIP IS BORING.”

“COME & SEE.”

“THE CHURCH IS IRRELEVANT IN THIS DAY & AGE.”

“COME & SEE.”

“NO ONE WILL TALK TO ME.”

“COME & SEE.”

“CHRISTIANS ARE NARROW-MINDED & BIGOTED.”

“COME & SEE.”

IF WHAT YOU HAVE FOUND HERE IS ENOUGH TO REFUTE THOSE & ALL THE OTHER ARGUMENTS SOMEONE MIGHT OFFER FOR NOT WANTING TO JOIN YOU HERE, SIMPLY USE PHILIP’S “*COME & SEE*” APPROACH – AND JOIN IT WITH DON’S “*I’LL PICK YOU UP SO YOU DON’T HAVE TO WALK IN ALONE.*”

THERE IS SUCH A CLEAR & SIMPLE MESSAGE IN THIS PASSAGE THAT I HESITATE TO COMPLICATE IT, BUT I FEAR I MUST.

THERE IS A PART OF THIS CLEAR & SIMPLE MESSAGE THAT I FIND TROUBLING.

YOU SEE, THERE WAS A TIME – NOT THAT MANY YEARS AGO – WHEN A “*COME & SEE*” APPROACH WAS ALL THAT WAS NECESSARY TO BRING ABOUT CHURCH GROWTH.

“COME TO CHURCH & SEE WHAT WE HAVE TO OFFER YOU.”

BUT EVEN IF WE WERE EFFECTIVELY DOING THE ASKING – WHICH CLEARLY WE’RE NOT – I DON’T THINK THE RESULTS WOULD BE THE SAME AS THEY WOULD BE IN YEARS PAST.

THE REASON THAT APPROACH NO LONGER WORKS AS WELL AS IT USED TO IS A GOOD ONE.

MY HUNCH IS THAT PEOPLE WANT SOMETHING MORE OUT OF LIFE THAN SIMPLY BEING FED THEMSELVES.

THERE ARE PEOPLE TODAY WHO ARE HUNGERING FOR MEANING IN THEIR LIVES.

THEY WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

THEY WANT TO MATTER.

THEY WANT TO GIVE.

THEY WANT TO LOVE.

THEY WANT TO BE CARING, COMPASSIONATE & CONTRIBUTING.

THEY WANT TO SERVE.

I THINK PART OF THIS IS A DIRECT RESPONSE TO THE DIVISIVENESS & BIGOTRY THAT ARE SO PREVALENT IN THE WORLD TODAY.

PEOPLE WHO FEEL (AS JESUS FELT) A GENUINE PASSION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE – THOSE WHO BELIEVE (AS JESUS BELIEVED) - IN THE INHERENT DIGNITY & WORTH OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL, ARE NO LONGER CONTENT TO *BE* SERVED.

THEY (LIKE JESUS) WANT TO BE THE ONES DOING THE SERVING.

PEOPLE DON'T WANT TO JUST "*COME & SEE.*"

THEY WANT TO "*GO & DO.*"

LAST YEAR, ON THIS VERY WEEKEND, THERE WAS A PASSAGE & A THEME THAT FIT PERFECTLY WITH THE ALIGNMENT OF THREE IMPORTANT EVENTS IN OUR NATION – ONE OF THEM BEING THE OBSERVANCE OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY – ONE OF ONLY TWO NATIONAL HOLIDAYS THAT ARE BOTH RELIGIOUS & SECULAR IN NATURE (THE OTHER BEING THANKSGIVING).

ONCE AGAIN, THIS PASSAGE & THIS THEME FIT PERFECTLY WITH THE MESSAGE MARTIN LUTHER KING PROCLAIMED.

IN FACT, ONE OF HIS MOST POWERFUL & WELL-KNOWN SERMONS – “*THE DRUM MAJOR INSTINCT*” – SEEMS TO ADDRESS THIS PRECISE ISSUE.

DELIVERED MORE THAN 50 YEARS AGO, KING SAID,

“*JESUS COMES TO US AND SAYS, ‘OH, I SEE, YOU WANT TO BE FIRST.*’

YOU WANT TO BE GREAT.

YOU WANT TO BE IMPORTANT.

YOU WANT TO BE SIGNIFICANT.

WELL, YOU OUGHT TO BE.

IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE MY DISCIPLE, YOU MUST BE.’

BUT HE REORDERED PRIORITIES.

AND HE SAID, ‘YES, DON'T GIVE UP THIS INSTINCT.

IT'S A GOOD INSTINCT IF YOU USE IT RIGHT.

IT'S A GOOD INSTINCT IF YOU DON'T DISTORT IT AND PERVERT IT.

DON'T GIVE IT UP.

KEEP FEELING THE NEED FOR BEING IMPORTANT.

KEEP FEELING THE NEED FOR BEING FIRST.

BUT I WANT YOU TO BE FIRST IN LOVE.

I WANT YOU TO BE FIRST IN MORAL EXCELLENCE.

I WANT YOU TO BE FIRST IN GENEROSITY.

THAT IS WHAT I WANT YOU TO DO.’

KING GOES ON TO SAY:

AND JESUS TRANSFORMED THE SITUATION BY GIVING A NEW DEFINITION OF GREATNESS.

IF YOU WANT TO BE IMPORTANT—WONDERFUL.

IF YOU WANT TO BE RECOGNIZED—WONDERFUL.

IF YOU WANT TO BE GREAT—WONDERFUL.

BUT RECOGNIZE THAT HE WHO IS GREATEST AMONG YOU SHALL BE YOUR SERVANT.

THAT'S A NEW DEFINITION OF GREATNESS.

AND THE THING THAT I LIKE ABOUT IT IS THAT BY GIVING THAT DEFINITION OF GREATNESS, IT MEANS THAT EVERYBODY CAN BE GREAT, BECAUSE EVERYBODY CAN SERVE.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO HAVE A COLLEGE DEGREE TO SERVE.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO MAKE YOUR SUBJECT AND YOUR VERB AGREE TO SERVE.

YOU ONLY NEED A HEART FULL OF GRACE, A SOUL GENERATED BY LOVE.

AND YOU CAN BE THAT SERVANT.

YOU SEE, IT MAY HAVE BEEN MORE THAN 50 YEARS AGO, BUT I THINK DR. KING'S WORDS ARE RESONATING WITH PEOPLE MORE TODAY THAN THEY EVER HAVE BEFORE.

PEOPLE ARE NO LONGER CONTENT TO JUST "COME & SEE."

THEY WANT TO "GO & DO."

MARTIN LUTHER KING'S DEFINITION OF GREATNESS CAN APPLY TO US AN INDIVIDUALS OR TO US AS A CHURCH OR TO US AS A NATION.

IF WE WANT TO BE GREAT, OUR GREATNESS WILL COME WITH OUR SERVICE.

IT'S NOT MARTIN LUTHER KING WHO'S SAYING THIS – IT'S JESUS HIMSELF.

**YOU CAN BE A GREAT PERSON, WE CAN BE A GREAT CHURCH,
AMERICA CAN BE A GREAT NATION – IF OUR GREATNESS IS DEFINED
BY OUR SERVICE.**

**WHEN YOUR FRIENDS, YOUR NEIGHBORS, YOUR FAMILY
MEMBERS “COME & SEE” WHO WE ARE, MAY THEY DISCOVER THAT
WE ARE SERVANTS THAT “GO & DO.” AMEN.**

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