

Worship Series: “Growing in Gratitude”

“What Has God Done?”

Sermon Text: John 1:29-42

FUMC Arlington, Texas 76011

Baptism of the Lord: 15 January 2017

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“I hate ingratitude more in a man
than lying, vainness, babbling, drunkenness,
or any taint of vice whose strong corruption
inhabits our frail blood” (--William Shakespeare)

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29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’ 31 I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.” 32 And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 33 I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ 34 And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

35 The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” 37 The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38 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?” 39 He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon. 40 One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. 41 He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed). 42 He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter) [John 1:29-42].

There is a lot going on in John’s Gospel Chapter 1. It opens with an recreation of Genesis 1. The initial 18 verses claim that Jesus is the new creation from God similar to the creation of the world. So we might say Genesis is the “creation of the world” story and John’s prologue is the “creation of the word” story. Next John writes that Jesus is the Word of God incarnate and it is Jesus who establishes “grace and truth.” According to John this makes Jesus the one who reveals most completely who God is and by doing so Jesus supplants Moses in making God known to human beings (1:17).

Our lesson begins as John the Baptizer declares he the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy; John will “prepare the way for the Lord.” To be sure, when John meets Jesus, he becomes a witness as he declares that Jesus is “the Son of God” (1:34). The next day, after John’s confession, a two

disciples follow Jesus. Andrew fetches his brother Simon and takes him to Jesus. Others soon follow.

One odd thing I noticed about chapter 1 is that three times the phrase “The next day” occurs. It reminded me of a quotation that reads: “History is just one darned thing after another.” “Day one, then day two, then day three” John seems to suggest. This happened, then that that happened, and then a third thing happened. There seems to be some confusion as to who exactly said that history is “simply one darned thing after another.” The quote has been attributed to Churchill, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Arnold Toynbee, or any one of a half-dozen other candidates. But here we have the idea in John:

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” **The next day** John again was standing with two of his disciples, **The next day** Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me” (John 1:29, 35, and 43).

When these disciples asked Jesus where he was staying, he said, “Come and see” This recaps Jesus whole ministry. He doesn’t just talk people to death—he invites them to experience for themselves what he offers. “Follow me” and “Come and see.” Jesus is the one in whom God establishes “grace and truth.

Occasionally someone recommends a restaurant that I would have likely not discovered for myself. Have you ever risked doing something because someone you trusted recommends it? Have you ever tried out a shoe or other piece of workout gear endorsed by someone in which you have confidence? Have you gone to a movie or read a book because a friend suggested it? Would it make a difference if the person was known to you? Or do you take the word of a salesperson or tele-marketers?

Our lesson begins with John as he is with two of his disciples. While standing there John sees Jesus. John does what is natural—drawing attention to Jesus: “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” Later Jesus will say to these disciples: “Come and see.” And they will. This is evangelism.

Jesus did evangelism by sharing the good news which is the literal meaning of the word. Yet we have somehow, somehow turned evangelism into a word with a bad reputation. Remember Lieutenant Dan Taylor who asked Forrest: “Have you found Jesus yet, Gump?” Forrest Gump answers, “I didn’t know I was supposed to be looking for him, sir.” I think we are to look for him. Evangelism puts us in a situation of responsibility—and we may feel like we have enough trouble already. It is a tragedy that evangelism has a bad reputation because truly evangelism is the church’s life-blood. Jesus’ closing message before ascending into heaven was a command: “Go into all the world, and make disciples.”

Evangelism is the delight of John, the command from Jesus to potential followers: “Come and see,” and the first generation of followers bringing those they loved to meet the Messiah. This in a nutshell sums up of evangelism. It is this story—our grasp of ourselves in the larger story of God through Jesus—that we can tell others. The first disciples invited others to experience how they might know hope, peace, and joy because of Jesus and with the community that formed around him.

Do we remember stories in which we invited people we know to “come and see?” Our lesson offers us the chance to retell the story of FUMC, Arlington so that we might invite others to come and see today (ideas modified from: *Feasting on the Word: Year A, Volume 1*).

Oddly when we invite someone to “come and see”—miracles can happen. Through the years the FUMC Samaritans of Graham made visits to James and Mary Youngblood in their home on Plum Street. After one of these weekly visits a Samaritan came by the church office and asked if someone from the Missions work area could repair the Youngblood’s door knob on their front door—it wouldn’t lock. It was to be a simple repair—probably a quick 30-minute job.

Upon inspecting the doorknob, it was suggested that the whole doorframe be replaced instead of just the doorknob, and perhaps a new front door would be nice. When this project

was completed, the workers decided to continue inside and partition off a bedroom and paint the walls, and the carpet really needed to be replaced, and how about the kitchen and bathroom—these areas could use a little repair work, too.

As workers came by to complete one project, they were dreaming and planning the next project they wanted to do for James and Mary. The end result was a complete renovation of the inside of the little house on Plum. There were new chairs and a couch, a new kitchen stove, new mattresses, some new windows, a handicapped bathroom. The kitchen floor had been leveled so that they did not have to duck-tape the refrigerator door shut anymore.

Mary was so excited when she first saw all the work that had been done that she said, “I never lived in a house as pretty as this. It’s my dream house.” James, who was recovering from a broken hip from a slip on the ice, returned to the house via a brand new “state of the art” wheel chair ramp built by Southern Bleachers. Had James lived, the youth had plans to paint the outside of his house for him this spring.

All in all, it was a project that started with a doorknob and ended up blessing the lives of all who had a part in it—there were many workers and many who contributed financially to make it happen.

Oddly when we invite someone to “come and see”—miracles can happen. And know it or not—we are doing evangelism.