

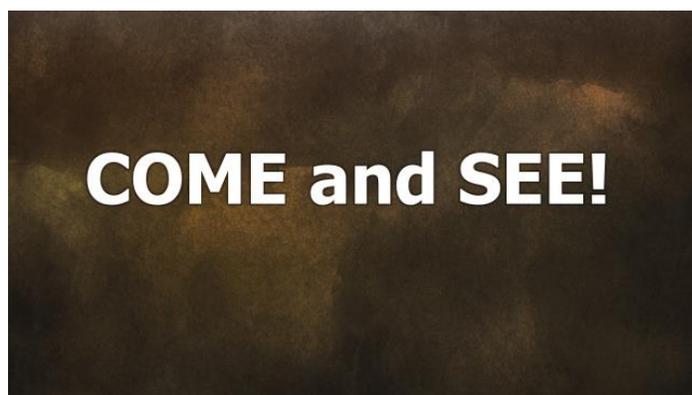
5 EPIPHANY  
FIRST LUTHERAN

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PSALM 42:1-5; JOHN 4:1-42  
*Come and See*

*Dear friends in Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

*Prepare our hearts, Lord, to receive your Word. Silence in us any voice but your own, that in hearing we may believe, and in believing, we may obey your will revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Amen.*



Those three little words form a phrase that, all by itself, is *mood neutral*. Its **meaning** is clear enough, but its *context* is not. We really need some supporting information to know how to interpret the **intent** of that expression. Here's an example:

Picture two children: tow-headed, blue-eyed, 7 and 9 years old...who were **supposed** to be asleep in their beds. Stir into the mix a **little black kitten** and a big **Golden Retriever dog**...you get the picture.

I left my first call after 6 ½ years to go back to grad school, so my life was suddenly consumed once again by going to class, reading books, doing research, defending papers...*and*...trying to be a good husband and father as well. On **that** night I was deep into my work when suddenly I heard Carolyn *whisper-shout* at me from upstairs...**Scott!** she said urgently, *Come here!!*

I was pretty sure there was nothing **too** seriously wrong – I would've heard lots of *weeping-and-gnashing-of-teeth* had that been the case. However, it was not an interruption I welcomed since I was trying to get a paper written so that I could grab a few hours of sleep before class the next morning...

But...duty called and so I went...

Well, it was obvious as soon as I turned the corner on the stairs that **all** was **well** in the **world**, that there was no fire to be **extinguished**, no scoldings to be **delivered**, no punishment to be **meted out**... *Come and see*, said Carolyn with a smile as she urged me up the stairs with her hand...

And there in **one** bed were our two children – **and their two pets**: Rachel's little black kitten curled up in her blond hair, and that big dog keeping Mark's feet warm...all of them sleeping in heavenly peace.

*Come and see!*

We've **heard** that phrase **three times** already in John's Gospel – **twice** in the **first** chapter, and again now in our passage for today. When Jesus first comes on the scene, John the Baptist proclaims, ***Behold, the Lamb of God!***

So right away two of John's disciples go to Jesus to find out more about him...and the only thing they can think to ask him is: *Where are you staying?* He replies, *Come and see* – so the men go and see, and they spend the whole day with the Lord. Then we're told that the disciple named Philip finds his friend, Nathaniel, and says, ***We've found the Messiah – it's Jesus...from Nazareth!***

**Cynically** Nathaniel says to Philip, *Can anything good come out of Nazareth?* But his friend simply smiles and says, *Come and see!*

In that sense, ***Come and see*** would be a great **motto**, or **slogan**, or **brand** for the whole Gospel of John. For in this Apostle's story, Jesus is **all** about doing **signs** for people to **see** that will *lead them* to **faith**. Seven times the Lord does something amazing:

1. He turns the water into wine
2. He heals a royal official's son
3. He mends a paralyzed man's feet so that he can stand on his own
4. He feeds more than 5,000 people with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish
5. He walks on water
6. He gives sight to a man who was born blind
7. And he raises Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus is...the epitome...of one who truly **cares** for his **neighbors**... It's **not** because he's a **kind** person, but because he's filled with **compassion**! Kindness can be...*Minnesota Nice*, right?

We're polite, we try to put the best spin on things, we're nice to strangers, we're rarely rude...

10 years ago, while on sabbatical, Carolyn and I spent two weeks in Philadelphia – it was where our son bought a house when he was stationed at McGuire AFB across the river in New Jersey. Every morning we'd get up and head out for our daily walk before it got too hot – always picking a different route to see as much of the city as we could.

Inevitably, we'd meet somebody and say hi – and inevitably we'd be greeted in the *Philly fashion*. With a shake of the head and a jut of the jaw, and without a smile, they'd say ***How you doin?*** At first we didn't know if they were saying HI or asking for a fight!! But we quickly figured out that's just how **they** do ***Philly nice!***

So there's a huge difference between **kindness** and **compassion**, right? Being kind means we can stay uninvolved in a person's life. Being compassionate **BY DEFINITION** means that we enter into a person's pain to **be with them**, and **embody for them** a sense of **hope**. The first is **easy**...the second, **not so much**... The **first** is what I usually do...the **second** is what **Jesus** always **did**...always **DOES!!**

It's his prelude, his introduction, his overture to a ***symphony of grace*** that will **surround** that person with his **healing presence**, and **fill** their **hearts** with a **song of faith**.

Come and see, indeed!

And though each of these signs is special for the people who **benefitted** from them, or first **witnessed** them, we're **also** told by John that those same signs are for **our** benefit as well.

Close to the end of his Gospel, in fact, John tells us in chapter 20:30 & 31 *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God; and that through believing, you may have life in his name.*

And that is **exactly** what happens to the woman in our story for today.

But first, some background. We're told that she was a **Samaritan**. Now, Jews and Samaritans were like spiritual first-cousins, they were very, very close – worshiped the same **God**, shared much of the same history, read the same **bible** (with a couple of changes) – **and they hated each other** – with a **passion** that made them **crazy** when they were around each other!!



The scene on the screen is from Romeo and Juliet: one is a Capulet while the other is a Montague, and the two families are mortal enemies: just like the Hatfields and McCoys, or the Clantons and the Earps in their infamous Gunfight at the OK Corral!

The Samaritans thought **they** were **right** – and the Jews were **wrong**...  
The Jews thought that **they** were right – and the Samaritans were **wrong**...in **fact**, the Jews thought the Samaritans were **unclean** – and they'd never eat or drink anything that had been touched by one of those dirty people!!

...Until **Jesus** comes along, and decides that he just **has to travel** through Samaria, and **stop to rest** at their famous well...

*Well*...along comes a woman to draw some water to take home for cooking and cleaning. He looks at her and says, *Hey – get me a drink*...



And **off** they go into an amazing conversation about **life's struggles**, about the **hope** that every human heart longs for, about the conflict between their **peoples**, and about the **pain** in her life...

History has treated this poor woman harshly, labelled her a woman of loose morals. Her *five-husbands-and-current-housemate* have made her an easy target for those who like to throw stones... However, there's nothing else in the passage that questions her **character** – in fact, quite the **opposite!**

We don't know the details of her story, but there's a very good chance that her five husbands had either **died** – one after the other, or had **divorced** her, probably because she couldn't have babies. And the man with whom she is **now** living? That could very well be a **brother** of one of her former husbands who agrees to let her live in his house so that she won't have to live on the street...it would be his duty as prescribed by God's Law.

So into her world of hurt, enters this crazy Jewish man **breaking** all kinds of **boundaries** right and left. His request for a **drink** shows he does **not** consider Samaritans unclean. His eagerness to **speak** with her without a chaperone makes the disciples nervous – but not **her**. And his offer to give her that **living water of faith** shows that **she** – regardless of **where** she's **been** or **what** she's **done** – deserves to be called: **beloved child of God**...

Jesus **sits** with this woman, and enters her world **without judgement**. And, I'm guessing, he **also** thoroughly **enjoys** himself engaging her **quick wit** and **deep faith**. With NO ONE ELSE, anywhere in scripture, does Jesus have a deeper conversation about **faith** – not with his **disciples**, not with his **opponents** from the **temple** – and certainly not with **Nicodemus** from a couple of weeks ago.

Look at the image on the screens that compares Jesus' conversations with that famous man and with this unnamed woman:

### **Nicodemus**

male (respected, powerful)  
Pharisee/high status  
Jewish "insider"  
named  
comes to Jesus at night  
no sincere dialogue  
ambiguous faith, private

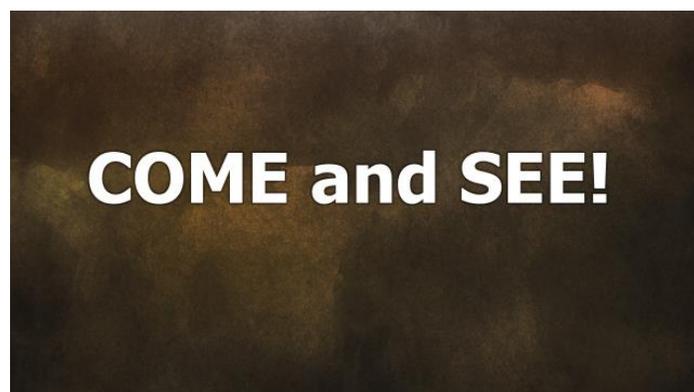
### **Samaritan Woman**

female (vulnerable, disregarded)  
unmarried woman/low status  
Samaritan "outsider"  
unnamed  
approached by Jesus in daylight  
engages in extended dialogue  
bold faith, public declaration

This woman reveals herself to be a person of **great faith**. She even makes that incredible confession: *I know that the Messiah is coming, and when he comes, he will proclaim all things to us...*

**And then do you remember what Jesus says to her? *I AM* he – In no uncertain terms, Jesus uses *I AM!* The HOLIEST NAME FOR GOD the Lord claims for himself! I AM *the Messiah*, he says, *you're talking to him!!***

Well, **that *blows her away*** – so **much** so that she actually drops her valuable water jar on the ground and runs all the way back into town...She's **so excited, she can't think of anything else.** **And do you remember what she says to the people???**



***Come and see!!!** Come and meet this man who's told me everything I've ever done!! You don't think he could be the Messiah...DO YOU???*

Come and see... **and you know what happens when we actually see?** – we become believers...again, and again, and again...

...which is **exactly** what happens to that **whole village of Samaritans**. They come to see what the woman is talking about...and are so impressed with this man who might just be the Messiah that they ask him to stay with them – for two days they break bread together – Jews and Samaritans: they share their life's stories with one another, they talk about their faith together, they share their dreams and fears...with the man who knows it all – a man who's no longer a stranger to them, but one they now call ***the savior of the world!!***

This is the same invitation that Jesus offers to you and to me:

Come and see, he says...

Come and see in me that **fountain** of the **living water** of **faith**...

Come and see in me the **God** who will **hold you by the hand**...

Come and see in me the One who can *heal your hurts* and *warm your hearts*

Come and see in me the savior of your people, the savior of the world.

Come, Lord Jesus...

Amen.