

“John's Legacy: From the Beginning”

A Sermon Based on John 1:29-39

First Presbyterian Church, Kingwood

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John Maxwell's a prolific author and a sought after speaker who knows how to tell a story that makes a point. That's why in his book called *The Winning Attitude* he tells this one.

"Two cows" John writes, "were grazing in a pasture one day, when they saw a milk truck. On the side of the truck were the words, 'Pasteurized, Homogenized, Standardized, with Vitamin A.'"

About a minute after the truck passed by, one cow sighed and said to the other, "Makes you feel sort of inadequate, doesn't it?"

Now you've probably never thought of it this way. And there's no reason why you should, but there's a connection between that story and the Gospel of John. Because many scholars now believe that at least part of the reason that John wrote his Gospel was, well, because he thought the other Gospels, by themselves were sort of inadequate. They were accurate accounts. They just weren't complete. They needed something more.

So John wrote a Gospel that supplements the stories found in Matthew, Mark and Luke. And the story we read from John 1 this morning is a perfect example of how he does it. For when you first read it, you say to yourself. I know that story. It's the story of Jesus and John the Baptist. And you're right it is. And you're right, you already know that story. But what you don't know is the rest of the story.

So when John tells the story, the actual description of Jesus' being baptized is left out! Did you notice? I mean if you want to prove it to yourself, you can back and look for it. But if you do, you won't find it. Because it's not there. And the reason is because John knows you already know that part of the story. What he wants you to know is the rest of the story, the part of the story that's all about trust.

As John tells it, the story has three parts. In the first part we learn about John's trust in the One who sent him. In the next part we learn about two of John's disciples who trust what he tells them when he says, "Look, the Lamb of God." And in the last part of the story, Jesus trusts two men who walk up to him and ask him, "Rabbi, where are you staying?" He trusts them enough to say, "Come and see."

So it doesn't take much digging to discover that in this one story that John tells us as he begins his gospel, there are really three stories. And they're all about trust. But this morning I want to dig a little deeper. I want to talk with you about the kind of trust you have in Christ, and the kind of trust He has in you.

So let me simply ask. What about you? What the kind of trust do you have in Christ. Do you have a "come and see" kind of trust or a "wait and see" kind of trust? A "wait and see" kind of trust is a trust that puts its faith mostly in the future. It believes in a someday, just not a today.

A few years ago, a movie came out. It was a comedy. And it was called *Waking Ned Divine*. Maybe some of you saw it. Anyway, there's a scene in the movie that pictures a "wait and see" kind of trust really well. So let me set up the scene.

The movie takes place in a tiny Irish village called Tulaigh Mhór. And in this scene, the parish priest, who's actually just a curate, (that's what you call a student priest who's still in training) is talking to a ten year old boy.

"Do you ever see God?" the boy asks.

"Not directly," the curate says, "though I trust I'll see Him someday."

"Does your job pay well" the boy inquires.

"No," the curate tells him, "the rewards of my work are mostly spiritual."

There's a moment of silence. Then the curate's face lights up. In a flash, he says to the boy who he imagines is interested in becoming a curate, "So have you ever thought about a life of service to the church?"

And the boy says, "No, not really. I don't want to work for someone I can't see who doesn't pay a decent wage!" Then he smiles, and walks away. Not because he's because he's doesn't have faith. But because a "wait and see" faith just doesn't seem very rewarding to him.

And he's right! It isn't. Because when you have a "wait and see" faith, you don't expect to see God. You trust you'll see Him someday. It's just going to be in the future. So you don't look for Him to show up now, in the present.

When you have a "wait and see" faith, you don't see any real reason to give your life to serve Him either. Because you trust, if you do, there may be spiritual rewards. But they'll come in the future. And there won't be much of a payoff in the present.

And the two disciples of John the Baptist could have had that kind of faith. They could have had a "wait and see" faith that day. They could have listened to John say, "Look, there He is, the Lamb of God. He's going to take away the sin of the world." They could have heard him say it. They could have believed him. They could have trusted that someday Jesus would prove John right. In some way, he would take away the sins of the world. They could have done all that with a "wait and see" kind of faith and stayed right where they were standing.

But they wanted something more. They wanted to get closer to this man that John said was greater than him. And from the beginning of John's Gospel, that's what makes the difference for these two disciples.

In verse 40, the verse that comes just after the verses we read, we learn that one of the two disciples who heard John that day was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. But the name of the other man isn't mentioned. Which, by the way, seems strange, until you realize it's the "M-O" of John throughout the Gospel. He never mentions himself by name. So scholars have mostly concluded he doesn't do it here either. But he's the other disciple.

And they just could be right. For in the testimony of John that we read this morning in his letter, John talks about "that which was from the beginning." And this story just could be what he means. For if John was the other man in the story this was the beginning for him. This was the beginning of a "come and see" kind of faith. For when Andrew and John walk over to Jesus and ask him where he's staying, Jesus puts his faith in them. "Come and see" he says. "Come and see."

And in that simple invitation are so many other invitations. "Come watch me. Come hear me. Come touch me. And let me touch you. Let me show you what God looks like. Let me show you God in action. Let me show what He's doing. Let me show you how you can get personally involved with Him in His mission. "Come and see."

And they did. Two men who had been followers of John the Baptist looking for God to show up someday became followers of Jesus Christ watching God show up in their lives every day. They watched Christ work and they worked with Him. And it changed their lives. Because it showed them how to do more than just live a life. It showed them how to leave a legacy.

"That which was from the beginning," John says. It all began the day I decided I wanted more than a "wait and see" faith. So I didn't just listen to John talk about Him. I walked

over to Him. I asked Him where He was staying because I wanted to get closer to Him. I wanted to learn more about who he was and what He was planning to do.

That's John's story. And the question this morning is what's yours? What kind of trust, what kind of trust do you want to have. Do you want to have a "wait and see" kind of trust? Or do you want to have a "come and see" kind of trust? Because if you want to have a "come and see" kind of trust there are some doors that I believe Christ is holding open for you.

Why don't you "come and see" what Jesus is doing on a Saturday morning in a project called "Rebuilding Together Houston?" Why don't you "come and see" how He's changing lives later on this month at Houston Presbyterian Cursillo? Why don't you "come and see" the way He's using coaches to build Christian faith into student-athletes and their friends at our next Super Bowl Breakfast? It's coming up again in January? Why don't you "come and see" what God could do through the missions and ministries of this church if you decide to increase your pledge this year? In a moment Lee Beckelman, our Stewardship Chair, is going to say a few words about that. Why don't you "come and see" the kind of disciple you can become if you give up a "wait and see" kind of faith for a "come and see" faith?

Let's pray ...