

*"Too Light a Thing"* 1/16/2011 preached at Christ UMC John 1:29-42, Isaiah 49:1-7  
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*Our ministries as local church's in our communities is just a part of what God invites us to "come and see."*

I am grateful for the opportunity to share the Gospel with you this morning.

Read John 1:29-42

In Seminary I was able to finally engage in an activity I always hoped to experience. I always wanted to experience the soaring freedom of flying. I had a friend who agreed to teach me to hang Glide. When I finally got off the ground and experience the exhilaration of flight in ended when I took my eyes from the horizon before me and looked at the ground below me, a cow pasture and yes I landed, or should I say crashed just where you might think. In this experience of hang gliding, I learned to look to where you want to soar, to the where you could be and not to the ground where you don't want to be. I learned this from this odiferous experience.

What we see drives who we are and who we seek to be, even who we imagine and dream we can be. John the Baptist sees the One for whom he has prepared the way and says, *"Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* John the Baptist has known his role and lived it, baptizing with the water of repentance, but he also knows *"One who is coming after him: whose sandal he is not worthy to untie."*

John witnesses with his actions to what God has called him to do and to be, and does his work, yet he also sees all that God is and will do. And suddenly two of his disciples catch the vision and follow Jesus.

I love the interaction between them and Jesus, for it combines reality and possibility as the gospel writer does throughout John's gospel. The disciples asked *"Rabbi, where are you staying."* And Jesus replies, *"Come and see,"* On the surface a simple and direct exchange in the present, yet on a deeper level they are statements pregnant with possibilities. *"Where are you staying?"* is the present reality and also filled with all the places Jesus will be staying, in the next chapter John records his presence at the wedding in Cana of Galilee and his cleansing of the Temple. The deeper reality is that Jesus does not "stay" anywherebut is always moving toward God's Kingdom, always, inviting, calling people to follow him as his disciples.

Jesus' reply *"Come and See,"* is both where Jesus is laying his head and all he is and will be doing, which for John, the gospel writer, is bringing glory to God and God's glory to earth.

And disciples followed, and became new persons, persons they may not have even imagined they would be or could be. When Andrew brought his brother, Jesus said, *"You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas."*

And of course this is just the beginning of the following by disciples of Jesus. Disciples who see who Jesus is and who Jesus will enable them to be. Disciples who see reality for what it is; and live and work toward the vision of what it can be as they work together with Jesus.

When John Wesley began the Methodist movement he saw what was and what God was calling into being. He saw people in and outside of the church captured in the darkness of the reality around them. He saw people from whom the Spirit of life had vanished, or had been stolen,. And Wesley saw that God had more to do with them.

He did one of the original "Re-think church" campaigns. He took the gospel outside of the church to the people, people separated by sin and circumstances from God, from one another, and from all that God was doing and would do. And lo and behold Methodism went from some Oxford students so methodical in their practice of spiritual and social holiness to people who lived the dream and not only carried the message but also led others to do the same.

And the next thing you know, the Spirit of God was not only on fire across England but across the pond called the Atlantic Ocean. From dark reality, to following Jesus, the Light of the world. And as we heard earlier in the statement read, “We’re In It Together,” what amazing things can happen when we are in it together, with each other with Jesus leading us.

It is a vision of what God has done, is doing and will do that Isaiah proclaimed so long ago. To a people who sat in darkness, whom had gone from the darkness of captivity to a land destroyed, the very Temple that held God’s presence gone, a land of seeming darkness in which the light no longer shined.

But Isaiah called out to “Listen!..The Lord who called him from before he was born was not done with him yet, was not done with Israel yet.

In the midst of the devastation and the frustration that nothing seems to be happening, God is doing a new thing. Isaiah, even the faithful of Israel, are struggling to fulfill their mission just to bring back the house of Jacob, (and that is not going well);

And all of a sudden God is calling them to greater horizons. *It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel: I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.*

So Isaiah proclaimed and called the people, So Jesus lived and invited the people to “Come and See” and the people followed: Just so we are to claim that same vision, that faith, that hope, that dream.

There are dark, devastating realities around us, seemingly intractable issues and problems we face, and yet the call is clear, the promise is sure that God will “lift our eyes beyond the shadows of the earth to see the light of God’s eternity.

How appropriate it is that we United Methodist living in the dawn of the new reality of the Upper New York Conference should give thanks and celebrate that “We’re In It Together,” on Human Relations Day, and just before the day we celebrate the work and vision of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

All of this in the context that just two weeks ago we celebrated Epiphany and four weeks Christmas, the birth of love and hope. Have we forgotten? Do we no longer see? How much we need to remember, the day before the celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday and some 46 years since he stated his dream on the Washington monument mall on the hundredth anniversary of the emancipation proclamation. Remember his words as he said

*“Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. Speaking to the authorities fighting integration and racial justice he said “We will counter your force with soul force, we will match your ability to hate with our ability to love.”*

He goes on to state his dream that is born in his faith; *“With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope.*

*With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom when all of God’s children will be able to sing , (together).*

In the face of all the issues that divide people from one another and the rancorous voices that call us to division, and even blame disasters on the victims of the disaster, we need to remember.

We need to claim in our very being as individuals and as the church here in Snyder, and in Kenmore and throughout the Niagara Frontier, across New York State, across the nations and around the world;

*It is too light a thing,* we are disciples of the Light of the World and we will shine with that light, we will be the people God created us to be, people led by Jesus and empowered by the Spirit to be a Light to the nations, the hope of the world by the grace of God.

Thanks be to God. Amen.